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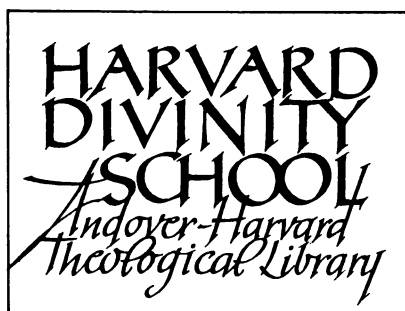
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Δ  
**GENERAL HISTORY**  
OF THE  
**CHRISTIAN CHURCH,**  
TO THE  
**FALL OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE**

---

**By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F. R. S. &c.**

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. I

THE SECOND EDITION IMPROVED.

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των ευσεβείας ἀληθῶν τὰς ἐνστάσεις, καὶ τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῖς  
σεφانوῦς εἰς αἰώνιον μνημὴν ἀνακηρυχθῶν.

EUSEBIUS.

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THE

## DEDICATION.

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TO SAMUEL SHORE, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

I DO not think that I can dedicate a history of the christian church to any person with so much propriety, as to one whose conduct, like yours, has long proved him to be a steady friend of christianity, and whose object it has been to preserve it as unmixed as possible with every thing that has a tendency to corrupt and debase it.

Every christian must rejoice in reviewing the rise of his religion, and the progress which, notwithstanding the opposition it met with from all the power and policy of man, it made in the world ; as it affords the strongest conviction of the solidity of the ground on which it rests, and thereby confirms to us the most valuable of all human prospects, that of a resurrection to immortal life, a prospect which nothing but the gospel can give us.

Also,

Also, a review of the glorious sufferings of the ancient martyrs, which evidences the firmness of their faith, in circumstances in which they had the best opportunity of satisfying themselves concerning the foundation of it, cannot fail both to strengthen our faith, and to animate our zeal, and thereby lead us to *feel*, and, if there should be occasion, to *act*, as they did, who through the hope of a *better life*, ~~cheerfully~~ endured all that men could inflict upon them in *this*. Compared with what *they* did and suffered, what is all that *we* can sacrifice in the same cause? How zealous then should we be to compensate by *active* services, for the want of more meritorious *passive* ones?

As an active friend of religious liberty, you, Sir, will rejoice to see the progress that christianity made while it was left to its own energy, unfettered by that fatal *alliance* which it afterwards unhappily formed with the powers of this world; when the zeal of its friends supplied its ministers with every thing that they wanted, without any compulsion, and when all, with one heart, devoted themselves to the cause of truth and virtue.

But you will likewise, in this period of the history, see the commencement of that most unnatural *alliance*, which has been the source of such dreadful abuses, and which continues to this day, when the *State*, instead of receiving the spirit of the *christian church*, a spirit of meekness, temperance,  
heavenly

## The DEDICATION.

heavenly-mindedness, and universal charity, imparted to the ministers of the church, its own corrupt principles and manners; inflaming them with a thirst for wealth and power, and even divesting them of the principles of humanity and compassion, whenever any obstacle opposed their ambitious views; so that at length the persecution of christians by christians became as bloody and unrelenting, as that of the pagan emperors.

Even in this reformed country, and with all the pretensions of modern times to liberality of sentiment, the ministers of Christ, *whose kingdom was not of this world*, deceived by the flattering consequences of this alliance, and in these instances departing from the precepts of equal justice, and the example of their great master, too frequently become advocates for such measures of government as would subject their fellow christians to heavy civil penalties; and are led to urge the continuance of laws which deprive acknowledged good subjects of the common rights of citizens, merely on account of a difference respecting religious doctrines or forms of worship.

This state of things should excite the temperate, but steady and unremitted efforts, of every true friend to the rights of mankind, to oppose all ecclesiastical, as well as civil, tyranny; and there can be no doubt but that, as this spirit diffuses itself, all opposition must in time give way before it,  
and

and an end be put to all usurpations on the consciences of men. And when we shall see that every claim to antichristian power actually yielded to general conviction, and perceive the weak supports on which that power has hitherto rested, many will wonder that human nature could ever have submitted to it, and our posterity will want the evidence of history to be convinced of its existence,

It is a real satisfaction, though at the first aspect of a melancholy kind, to trace the progress of those superstitions, and those corruptions, in doctrine and discipline, by which christianity has been so much debased, and the natural influence of it diminished, now that, by the force of its own principles, it has, in a great measure, recovered itself from the deplorable state into which it had sunk. This circumstance furnishes an additional evidence of its truth and importance, and affords a sure prospect that, in due time, it will purge itself from every thing that has hitherto defiled it, and become once more what it was at its first promulgation. And it may well be presumed that the knowledge we now have of those corruptions, and of the causes which produced them, will effectually prevent a relapse into any similar state for the future.

We may therefore consider ourselves as in a better situation than that of the primitive christians, as theirs may be compared to that of Adam in Paradise,



Paradise, innocent, indeed, but without the knowledge of evil, and therefore insecure ; whereas ours is a state of equal purity, but superior knowledge, and consequently of greater security ; so that, without the fear of any more corruptions, we may enjoy, by anticipation, the prospect of the certain, if not speedy, downfall, of all error, before the increasing light of truth, and of every power, temporal or spiritual, that opposes itself to *the kingdom of God and of Christ* ; which the sure word of prophecy informs us, is to establish itself in the world, and to continue till time shall be no more. We every day see signs of the nearer approach of those glorious times, in which truth, virtue, and liberty, will diffuse themselves over the whole earth, and when error, vice, and tyranny, will in every country fall before them.

You will rejoice with me that there is now one country in the world, and one of growing extent and importance, in which christianity subsists without any alliance with the state ; and that the eyes of a neighbouring kingdom, formerly the seat of a most grievous persecution, are now so far opened as to see the folly of depriving men of their civil rights on account of their religious opinions, that their freedom will probably be much more compleat than ours ; and with all the friends of liberty, you will indulge the pleasing prospect,  
that

that so glorious an example will be followed by other countries.

In the mean time, let us not fail to do our part to promote this great cause. Be it our study to understand the genuine principles of the gospel we profess, and to be assiduous in propagating them, by enlightning the minds of all to whom we have access.

Partaking, I hope, in your just feelings on this important subject,

I am, Dear Sir,

Your friend and

Fellow christian,

J. PRIESTLEY.

*Birmingham, Jan. 1. 1790.*

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## The P R E F A C E.

**T**HE idea of writing this history was first suggested by the attention that I have lately given to the ecclesiastical writers of the four or five first centuries, in order to determine what was the faith of the primitive church concerning the person of Christ. Seeing that this opinion, and others connected with it, had been greatly misconceived, and misrepresented, by all the ecclesiastical historians, I was willing to exhibit the original doctrine, and the gradual deviations from it, in a regular history of every thing relating to the christian church. For want of an ecclesiastical history written on these just principles, persons were under a necessity of forming wrong conceptions on this important subject from every history that could fall into their hands.

It also appeared to me, that there was no ecclesiastical history that was not either too voluminous to be generally read, or too concise to be of much

much use. Mosheim's, which is most read by Protestants, besides labouring under the great objection of mistating the important opinions above mentioned, is much too short on many interesting articles ; and his method, though he studied it perhaps too much, is by no means happy ; as he divides his work (which, indeed, most others do) into *centuries*, which is artificial and unnatural, and separates the *prosperous* from the *calamitous* events, which ought to be related in their natural connexion.

Considering how unfavourable an impression has been made upon many superficial thinkers by what Mr. Gibbon has advanced concerning the rise and progress of christianity, I also wished to see a church history in which the facts should be so stated, as of themselves to supply an answer to his artful insinuations. This is the best defence of christianity, shewing that to establish itself as it actually did, it must necessarily have been founded in truth. To assist my younger readers, I have made many observations of this kind.

Besides demonstrating the truth of christianity, in this the best of all methods, by a simple exhibition of *facts*, I wished to give young persons more especially an idea of the great *value* of christianity, by shewing its influence on the minds of those who first received it, and how nobly it led them to *think* and to *act*, raising them above the world, and all the

the honours and emoluments of it ; how, for the great *hope that it set before them*, they cheerfully submitted to *bear the loss of all things*, and made light of pain and death in every mode of torture. With this view I have been more particular than might have been expected from a history of this extent, in my account of the ancient *martyrdoms* ; judging from myself, that no reading is so interesting, or so useful. In Mosheim there is nothing of this kind. He only enumerates the persecutions, without mentioning any of the *particulars*, and this will not interest the reader at all. But by dwelling a little on these particulars, I flatter myself that I have written such a history as may not only be *consulted*, but be *read*, especially by young persons. However, as I have not only divided the work into a great number of *periods*, but also into *sections*, the subjects of which are distinctly specified, any person may, without much trouble, select or omit, whatever he pleases.

In composing this work, as well as my *History of Early Opinions concerning Christ*, I wrote immediately from *original writers*, and afterwards consulted the most respectable of the moderns, by which means I have been able to supply some articles which I had overlooked, especially, such as are collected from works not professedly historical. The authors thus referred to, I have never failed to consult with respect to every thing of consequence ;

quence ; and when I did not think that necessary, I have quoted the writers I have actually made use of ; which, it will be seen, has only been with respect to articles which no person in this age can be supposed to have any motive to misrepresent such as the later accounts of the Donatists. So established is the character of Dr. Lardner, for diligence and fidelity, that I have made no scruple, on several occasions, to copy him, and make use of his translations. By this means I have relieved myself when I could ; but I have spared no labour which I thought necessary to make my work useful and authentic.

I call this history a *general* one, and not *particular*, or *critical*. Whatever appeared to me to favour a *fable*, I have commonly omitted, and without any discussion. The same I have done with respect to *dates*, giving those which appeared to me to be nearest the truth, especially those supplied by Dr. Lardner. Not that I have any objection to the critical discussion of such subjects. On the contrary, I often think them of importance, and I sometimes take much pleasure in entering into them, as may appear from the dissertations prefixed to my *Harmony of the Gospels*, and my friendly controversy with the bishop of Waterford, concerning the duration of Christ's ministry. But this was not my object in the present work, which I wished to make interesting to the generality of readers

I have

I have brought the history to a very important period, comprehending the great controversies concerning the person of Christ, as settled by the four first general councils, and terminating with the removal of the power which stood in the way of that authority, temporal and spiritual, which was afterwards assumed by the bishops of Rome, the progress of which will be the great object of the next division of this work, if I continue it. But whether I shall pursue it any farther, I am wholly undetermined.

I have proceeded thus far, because I thought that I was able to throw new and important light upon the subject. With respect to what follows, I do not know that I shall be able to do so much; but it may be pleasing to some if I should do no more than select, and arrange, what has been already well done, so as to make a suitable continuation of this work to the reformation by Luther. If this should appear to be the wish of many of my readers, I shall probably undertake it; and then, if I should find myself at leisure, I may in the same manner, write the history of the reformation itself, and even continue it to the present century. In the mean time, what I have now done I apprehend to be sufficiently complete of itself.

It is generally observed that *old age is narrative*. And certainly of all the kinds of composition, *history* best suits the later periods of life, the powers

powers of *invention* diminishing, and those of *reflection*, at least a disposition to reflect, increasing. If I should find this to be the case with myself, I shall be happy to have so pleasing, and so useful, an employment in prospect. For of all history, that of the mind of man, in the progress of *opinions*, and their consequences, which is most conspicuous in what relates to christianity, will please me best. As we approach nearer to another state, every thing that has any reference to it naturally proves more interesting.

I am far from expecting that I, who have found errors in others, should have escaped them myself. If any be pointed out to me, I shall be ready to rectify them in future editions of the work.

N. B. The dates annexed to the names of the bishops of all the greater sees in the chronological table, at the end of this work, are taken chiefly from the *Abregé chronologique de l'Histoire Ecclesiastique*, 2 Vols.

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Since this was written it has pleased divine providence to remove me to a situation, in which I have had abundant leisure to continue this History even to the present time. The *Continuation* is comprized in four volumes 8vo. and dedicated to Thomas Jefferson President of the United States of America.

C O N-



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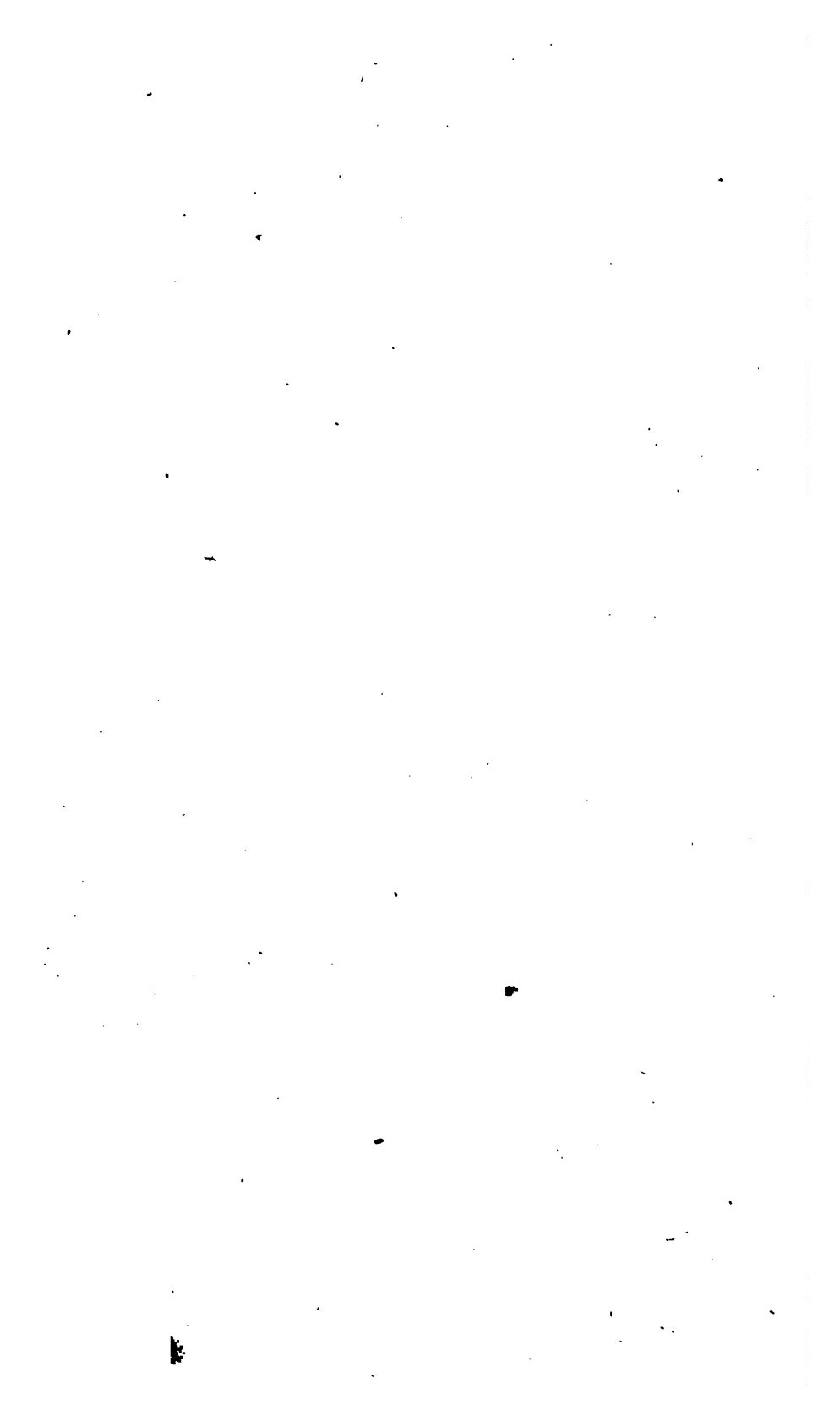
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## INTRODUCTION.

**I**F we judge of the importance of events by the greatness of their effects, and their influence on the well being of mankind, we must conclude that no history whatever can be so interesting as that of the rise and progress of christianity. The change which it has occasioned in the world is unspeakably more wonderful in its nature, than that which was brought about by the establishment of any empire, from the beginning of the world to the present day ; the Roman empire itself, which was of the greatest extent, and the longest duration of any of them, not excepted. While they all, in their turns, have gone to decay and ruin, the kingdom of Christ is still extending itself ; so that we cannot doubt but that it will at length embrace all mankind, and continue to the end of time. With respect to the value of christianity, it may with truth be said that it raises man above

man, even in his most civilized state, unspeakably more than men are by nature raised above brute animals. It forms them to true dignity of conduct in this life, and thus prepares them for that glorious and immortal life after death, with which it brings us acquainted.

This history is the more interesting, as it exhibits this greatest of all changes in the state of the world, taking its rise from the smallest beginnings, and triumphing, without the aid of external force, over all the powers that man could oppose to it.

Christianity, though founded on mere *opinion*, viz. the belief of certain facts, such as the miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the miracles performed by the apostles after him, produced visible and most extraordinary *effects*, both with respect to religion, and even civil government; and the evidence of the facts was so clear and striking, that the doctrines which were confirmed by it prevailed over every opposite system of *opinions*, even those which had taken the deepest root, and which had, from time immemorial, been connected with *practices* to which mankind had the greatest attachment, both from the fascinating nature of the things themselves, and the belief that the welfare of states absolutely depended upon the observance of them.

The religious worship of all the heathen world

was



## INTRODUCTION.

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was what is properly termed mere *superstition*, being altogether founded on an ignorance of the true causes of things ; and, consequently, it led men to pursue certain ends by means which had no connection with them ; and it is not probable that any knowledge that they would ever have acquired of the *real laws* of nature would have been sufficient to cure that superstition. It was either to the influence of the sun, moon, and stars, the earth, and other visible parts of nature, or to that of dead men (whose powers they imagined to be continued and enlarged after death) to which they had ascribed all the good and evil which they could not otherwise account for ; and, accordingly, these were the objects to which their religious worship had been directed. And being of course left to their own imaginations with respect to the methods of securing the favour of those deities, and naturally enough supposing that they were pleased with such things as pleased themselves, it is no wonder (the fancies of men being infinitely various) that among other methods they had recourse to acts, the object of which is to gratify sensuality or revenge, passions by which themselves were chiefly swayed. Accordingly, some of their religious rites and ceremonies were of an expensive and painful, and others of an alluring nature, consisting  
in

## 4 INTRODUCTION.

in the gratification of their sensual appetites ; but purity of morals had never been the object of any religion of the heathens, and the little knowledge they had of a future state (which had, no doubt, been derived from the tradition of some early revelation, miserably corrupted) was such as to have no influence on the conduct of even the lower classes of men, and was wholly disregarded by the higher.

The Jews, a people inconsiderable with respect to number, power, or extent of territory (who, after being a flourishing and independent nation, had been held in subjection by all the great monarchies of antiquity, from the Babylonian to the Roman) had alone the benefit of a religion instituted by God himself, and proved to be so by such interpositions of divine providence in their favour, especially at the promulgation of it, as the inveterate obstinacy and incredulity of that people had not been able to resist, and to which, after many relapses into idolatry, they were, in the time of our Saviour, most firmly attached. To the peculiar rites of their religion the generality of the nation, who were of the sect of the Pharisees, had added many observances of their own invention, and on these they laid as much stress as on things of divine institution ; while a few of the richer sort  
were

were of the sect of the Sadducees, who not only rejected the traditions of the Pharisees, but disbelieved the doctrine of the resurrection.

The Jewish nation had been favoured with an almost uninterrupted succession of prophets, from the time of Moses to that of Malachi, a period of more than a thousand years; but from that time there had been no prophets, nor any pretension to prophecy, for the space of more than four hundred years, when Jesus, the founder of the christian religion, immediately preceded by John the Baptist, rose among them.

About the time of his appearance there was a general expectation among the Jews of the coming of their *Messiah*, a person announced by the prophet Daniel under that title, which signifies one who is *anointed*, or appointed by God to an office of great dignity. But though it was expressly said that the Messiah was to be *cut off*, the Jews seem to have given no attention to this circumstance, but applied to him all that is said of their future *prince of the house of David*, who is to reign over them when they shall be restored to their own country, and be the most distinguished nation upon earth. They therefore, imagined that, as they were then in subjection to the Romans, their Messiah would deliver them from that state of servitude,  
and

and extend his conquests over the neighbouring countries, as David had done. The history of the Jews shews this expectation in the strongest light and our Saviour's conduct (and, as we may say, that of divine providence) was very much guided by it. For had Jesus been from the first announced in the character of the Messiah, [the Jews immediately connecting with it the idea of a temporal prince, and a conqueror (which he was not to be) much inconvenience would have arisen from it, especially with respect to the Romans, who being masters in the country, would have been jealous of such a person. ♦

Accordingly, when John, the forerunner of Jesus made his appearance, his commission went no farther than to announce the speedy approach of another person, *much greater than himself*. Like many other prophets, he called upon his hearers to repent, and as a token, it should seem, of a solemn promise to amend their lives, he by divine appointment required them to be baptized. Though John worked no miracles, he had in his manner and dress so much the appearance of one of the ancient Jewish prophets, and the austerity and sanctity of his life gave such a credit to what he taught, that he was generally received in the character of a prophet; in so much that tho' the rulers of the nation, and the teachers of the law, whole

## INTRODUCTION.

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whose hypocrisy and immoralities he inveighed against, took umbrage at his popularity, and had no faith in his divine mission, they durst not openly avow their opinion.

The scene of John's preaching was at first in the wilderness of Judea, which was under the government of the Romans, but afterwards in the country beyond Jordan, which was in the dominion of Herod, who respected him greatly. But the prophet having, with the liberty which became his character, reproved him for taking Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, and who had eloped from him, Herod, on what pretence does not appear, put him in prison; and Herodias, being highly incensed against him, induced her husband to give orders for his execution; taking advantage of a rash promise which he had made to give her daughter (who had pleased him by dancing at a public entertainment) whatever she should ask, and prompting her to ask the head of John. The preaching of John began in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, in the year 28 of our present æra, and he was put to death in the year following.

PERIOD



## PERIOD I.

FROM THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS TO  
THE DEATH OF NERO. A. D. 68.

---

### SECTION I.

*From the public Appearance of Jesus to his Ascension. A. D. 29.*

AT the death of John, Jesus had preached some weeks, and had a considerable number of followers, out of whom he had just before appointed *twelve* to be his constant attendants; and from being commissioned to preach his religion in distant countries, he gave them the appellation of *apostles*. His public ministry commenced soon after his being baptized by John; which was immediately followed by a remarkable appearance of something like the descent of a dove upon him, accompanied with an audible voice, saying,  
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*This is my beloved Son*; and this was the first intimation that John had who the person was whom he was sent to announce.

After his baptism Jesus was led by the spirit of God into the wilderness, where he continued forty days, as Moses had done in the mount, without eating or drinking; and in this time it is probable that he received his instructions what to preach, and how to conduct him self in his important mission. After this followed what is called his *temptation*, which was probably a vision, representing the various trials to which he would be exposed during the course of his ministry, guarding him particularly against ostentation, ambition, and a distrust of providence. After these scenes he lived for some time pretty much retired, as he had done before; though, no doubt employed in deep meditation on the subject of his important office, and preparing his mind for it by that fervent devotion, by which he was ever distinguished.

Though, in consequence of John's announcing him to be his Superior, a few of his disciples attached themselves to Jesus, and occasionally attended him, we have no account of any thing of consequence being done by him (except the miracle of changing water into wine at a private marriage feast, and this was probably in the autumn preceding) till after the passover which followed



his baptism. But on his return to Galilee after this passover, he gave his whole time to the instruction of all who came in his way, and performed the most illustrious miracles, particularly omitting no opportunity of showing his own benevolence, as well as proving his divine mission, by healing all the sick that were brought to him. Thus, after publicly preaching in a synagogue at Capernaum on the sabbath-day, he cured a demoniac who was present on the occasion, and on the same day Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever, and in the evening a multitude of persons, afflicted with diseases of various kinds.

These cures brought about him so great a concourse of people, that early the next morning he left the town in a private manner, and went into the mountainous part of the country; and the people still flocking to him from all the places in the neighbourhood, he gave them most excellent instructions on the subject of morals, insisting chiefly on good dispositions of heart, upright intentions, and universal benevolence, even to those who should hate and persecute them; and being well apprized of the general expectation of his countrymen, concerning the coming of the Messiah, and the ambitious prospects they entertained on that account, he enlarged particularly on the virtues of meekness, humility, and heavenly mindedness, as the most essential qualifications for

for that *kingdom of God* for the establishment of which they were looking. Knowing also the deference they had for the scribes, the public teachers of the law, he strongly guarded them against the abuses and corruptions which they had introduced into it by their traditions.

The doctrine which he taught with the greatest distinctness and emphasis was that of a future *resurrection to immortal life*, as that which he was more especially commissioned to republish with additional evidence: informing his hearers that he himself was appointed of God to come again after his death and resurrection, to raise all the dead, and to judge the world. This most important of all doctrines was probably the original revelation of God to man, but not being explicitly contained in the writings of Moses, whose commission had another object, the record of it was lost\*, and in consequence

\* We find the belief of a resurrection among the Jews in the time of our Saviour, and in that of the Maccabees long before him, so that it was probably the faith of that nation in all former times, as it continues to be so to this day. Our Saviour only corrected some mistakes concerning it. Now this is a doctrine of so extraordinary a nature, that it could never have been discovered, or even imagined, by men, and therefore must have been derived from some revelation. And as we have no account of such a revelation in the scriptures

consequence of this, though the belief of it was retained by the body of the Jewish nation, it was disbelieved by some, and much corrupted by others; the Pharisees particularly imagining that men were to have wives in a future state, and to live in other respects as they had done here. Besides correcting this mistake, and informing us that, in the future world, men are to be as the angels of God, and to live without propagating their species, Jesus taught no peculiar articles of faith. In every thing that was of importance, such as the unity of God, and the placability of his nature, the Jews had been sufficiently instructed by Moses and the prophets. These, therefore, he assumed as fixed principles; and in all his discourses and parables, which were admirably calculated to strike the imagination

of the Old Testament, it must have been prior to the writing of any of those books; though, being well known to the writers, and to the nation in general, it has so happened that they have not mentioned it. Had a discovery of so great importance been made to mankind after the time of Moses, or indeed after the flood, and before the Babylonish captivity, we should certainly have had some account of it in the Old Testament; this being of infinitely more moment than any thing recorded there. On this subject I refer my readers to a dissertation of mine on *the knowledge that the ancient Hebrews had of a future state.*

gination, and to impress the memory and the heart, the truth of them was taken for granted, as what would be admitted by all his hearers. The pure morality that he taught was uniformly exemplified in his own life, which was a pattern of the greatest moderation, benevolence, and piety. He declined no labour, in continually going about doing good; he made no ostentatious display of his miraculous powers; he spent much of his time in humble prayer, and upon all occasions testified his intire submission to the will of God.

It is not a little remarkable that, though Jesus plainly and repeatedly informed his disciples that he should be put to death, and rise again on the third day, they did not understand him; still supposing that, as he was the Messiah, he would soon appear in the character of a king; and they were more than once disputing among themselves who should enjoy the chief places of honour and power in his kingdom. But as he was used to speak to them in a figurative manner, they probably thought that by *death* he meant some scenes of difficulty and trial, and that his surmounting them was all that was meant by his *resurrection*. For when he was apprehended, and put to death, they gave up all their expectations from him, never supposing that they should see him any more; and when he did

did appear to them after his resurrection, they could hardly believe the interesting fact on the evidence of their own senses.

The miracles of Jesus were chiefly of a benevolent nature, consisting of healing diseases, and especially such as were seldom known to be relieved by medicine, at least in a short space of time, as blindness, leprosy, palsy, and insanity, which in that age was usually ascribed to the influence of demons; and there are three accounts of his raising persons from the dead. To relieve the wants of his auditors, in a place where no provisions were to be had, he twice fed a great multitude with a small quantity of bread and fishes, more being left than there was when he began to distribute.

A few of his miracles seem to have had no other object than to shew the power that was given him over the laws of nature, as his stilling a tempest, and walking on the sea, as well as his changing water into wine, mentioned before. Miracles of this kind, however, would tend to inspire his disciples with the greatest confidence in the divine power which attended him, and encourage them in preaching his religion, notwithstanding all the dangers to which they should be exposed; persuaded that, if they were not delivered from any particular distress, it was because the interest of the religion they taught made their sufferings more expedient

-dient. And their master had always forewarned them that they were not to expect their reward in this world. On the contrary, he plainly told them that none would be considered as his disciples, who would not be ready to give up their lives rather than renounce their religion; and that if any person should deny him, or be ashamed of him, in any circumstance, he would deny him to be his disciple when he should come in his glory.

Besides the voice from heaven, at the baptism of Jesus, he had a more express divine attestation of the same kind upon a mountain in Galilee, in the presence of three of his apostles, Peter, James, and John; when he appeared in great glory, surrounded by that bright cloud which was the symbol of the divine presence in the time of Moses, accompanied by Moses himself and Elias, who discoursed with him about his future sufferings, probably to encourage him to go through a scene so painful and humiliating, and at the same time so singular in its kind; as he was to exemplify in his own person the doctrine which he taught, viz. of a resurrection to immortal life, being, as he is called, *the first fruits from the dead*. This remarkable scene was closed with a repetition of the voice from heaven, Matt. xvii. 5. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye him.* Also a few

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few days before his death, when being in the temple, in the presence of a great number of people, and praying, he had said *Father, glorify thy name;* John xii. 28. *there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* This voice was so loud, that some of the people who were not near enough to distinguish the words, thought that it thundered, but others, perceiving the sounds to be articulate, said that an angel spake to him.

Notwithstanding the splendour of his miracles, Jesus was far from arrogating any thing to himself, but always ascribed his extraordinary works to his God and Father, who sent him, and acted by him, and to whose will he was at all times perfectly resigned. Together with sentiments of the most genuine piety, he discovered evident marks of great sensibility of mind, and of a tender compassionate disposition; feeling for his disciples and others, and attending to them much more than to himself. Thus, when he accompanied the friends of Lazarus to his grave, and saw them in tears, he wept also, though he was just going to raise him from the dead. When little children were brought to him, he not only blessed them, but took them up in his arms to do it. Foretelling the ruin that was to come upon his nation, and especially the destruction of the city of Jerusalem (which, as a prophet,

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he had particularly described) and viewing it from some distance, he wept over it; and as he was led to crucifixion, he bid the women who accompanied him, and lamented over him, not to weep for him, but for themselves, and for their children, on account of the calamities that would certainly befall them.

Notwithstanding the great and benevolent works continually performed by Jesus, and his popularity with the common people on that account; yet, as he paid no court to the leading men of the nation, but, on the contrary, omitted no opportunity of exposing their ambition and other vices, and frequently upbraided them before the people whose good opinion they affected, he incurred their utmost indignation. Their prejudices would not suffer them to believe that such a person as he could be their promised Messiah, and they ascribed the most wonderful of his works, that of curing demoniacs (and probably the rest also) to the power of Satan. Thus blinded by their passions, after many consultations what to do, they determined to put him to death, and at length resolved to do it by a public trial and execution. As this must have been effected by the Roman power, they could not doubt but the same power, if they could engage its interference in the case, would support them in the measure, and carry them through it in all its consequences.

This



This purpose of theirs was favoured by the base treachery of Judas Iscariot, one of his apostles, who had been offended at a reproof which Jesus gave him, when he had complained of the expence of a quantity of valuable ointment, which Mary the sister of Lazarus had poured upon his head, at the last entertainment at which he was present. Judas had perhaps given up all idea of Jesus being a king, or, at least, of any great advantage accruing to himself from adhering to him, and in a fit of resentment (which, however, lasted some days) he agreed with the chief rulers, for a sum of money, to shew them how they might apprehend him without alarming the multitude, and by night ; so that, however disposed, the common people would have no opportunity of interfering in his behalf. It was accordingly done about midnight, in a garden, at a small distance from the city, whither Jesus, distinctly foreseeing all that was coming upon him, had retired to pass the dreadful interval in prayer. Feeling like a man under the fullest view of his approaching painful death, and all the ignominious circumstances attending it, he was for a time in an agony of distress ; through the whole of which he, however, preserved a purpose, never for a moment to be shaken, of absolute resignation to the will of God ; and after this he perfectly recovered

covered the composure of his mind, and it never quitted him to the last.

Being apprehended by an armed force, after shewing that it was in his power to have rescued himself, he submitted to be conducted to the house of the high priest, and then before the sanhedrim, the chief court of judicature in the country, which was assembled for the purpose in the precincts of the temple. There, not knowing what charge to bring against him, on which they could sentence him to death, his judges hastily took up that of *blasphemy*, accusing him of speaking lightly of the temple, which they might think was most likely to destroy his interest with the common people. But not being able to prove this charge, the high priest, who presided in the court, solemnly asked him whether he was the Messiah; and upon his acknowledging it the majority of them voted his death, on the idea of his having arrogated to himself a high office from God which did not belong to him. On this Judas, who had betrayed him, was struck with such remorse, that he immediately went into the court, threw down the money that he had received as the reward of his services in apprehending him, saying, *I have betrayed innocent blood*, and then went and hanged himself. There could be no greater proof of the innocence of Jesus, and that his disciples, who were the best acquainted with his conduct, knew of no evil in him.

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding this condemnation, the Jews, being subject to the Romans, had not the power of executing their sentence, and therefore accused him to Pilate the Roman governor, of treason against the state, in assuming the character of a *king*; for such, in their opinion, the Messiah was. Pilate saw the malice of the Jews, and the perfect innocence of Jesus; but wishing to gain favour with the leading men of the nation, whom nothing less than the death of Jesus would satisfy, after doing every thing that he could to save him (at least to express his persuasion of his innocence) he gave orders for his crucifixion, which was the mode of death for which the Jews had been particularly clamorous, it being that to which the Romans had been used to sentence the most infamous criminals.

This scene of a painful and lingering death, preceded by a cruel scourging, and every mode of insult and abuse, both by the officers of the Jews, and the Roman soldiers, Jesus went through (as he had done both his trials) with the most perfect composure, and without expressing any resentment. And this is the more extraordinary, as his preceding agony in the garden shewed that he was possessed of the most exquisite sensibility. He had even the benevolence, and presence of mind, to pray for his executioners, that God would forgive them,

him, since they knew not what they did, and only executed the orders of their superiors. When he hung upon the cross, with that affection to his friends of which he had given the greatest proofs in all his conversation with them, on the evening before his death, and which never forsook him, he committed his mother to the care of his disciple John; and in his last words resigned his life into the hands of his God and Father, who, he was confident, would soon restore it to him again.

This tranquility, with which he submitted to death, is an evidence of his firm assurance of rising again; and as the history of his life, and especially of the last scenes of it, clearly proved that he was no enthusiast, it may be pronounced a tranquility which could never have been attained by any man, in those circumstances, without the best grounded persuasion of the truth of his divine mission. His whole behaviour shewed such dignity of sentiment, such benevolence, and piety, as is incompatible with either a weak or a wicked mind. No enthusiast, or impostor, could have conducted himself as he did; and they must either have given no attention to the incidents, or be utter strangers to the feelings of human nature, who can suppose that he was either the one or the other.

The manner in which Jesus died was peculiarly favourable to the design of providence, which

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was to make the most distinguished preacher of the doctrine of a resurrection himself a proof of the fact. He died in public, and by the hands of his enemies, to whom he was delivered up for that purpose. The reality of his death, therefore, could not be questioned, and his resurrection was proved by the abundant evidence of those who best knew him, and who were therefore the best judges of the fact, and who had no more expectation of it than his adversaries, and accordingly expressed as much surprise at it as they could have done. On this most unexceptionable evidence is the great truth of the resurrection of Jesus most firmly established. The most difficult to be convinced of it were the apostles themselves. When they were informed that he had actually appeared to some very respectable women of their acquaintance, they treated the report as an idle tale, and did not believe it. One of them was so unreasonably incredulous, that the testimony of ten of his brother apostles would not satisfy him; nor any thing less than his own seeing and handling his risen master.

Jesus continued after his resurrection to appear to his disciples, at intervals, for the space of forty days, so that there was sufficient time for them to recollect themselves and to satisfy themselves with respect to the fact, in whatever manner they should think

think proper. His first appearances were made when they did not expect him, and therefore could not impose upon themselves by their vain hopes, and others were by express appointment, when they had sufficient opportunity for considering what would satisfy them, and of procuring that satisfaction at their full leisure; and the consequence was such a firm persuasion in them all, of the actual resurrection of their master, and consequently of the truth of his promises concerning his second coming, to raise the dead and judge the world (when they would again enjoy his society, in a state of happiness and glory which would have no end) as carried them through difficulties and sufferings as great as he himself had experienced, and gave such an establishment to the christian religion, as that nothing in the power of its most violent enemies, and of the world, could overturn it.

Jesus first shewed himself to Mary Magdalen who was so far from expecting such an interview that she was one of those who had been at great expence in purchasing spices to embalm him, and when she first saw him took him to be the gardener. Before this, on finding the sepulchre open, she had run and told the apostles of such an unsuspected circumstance, and Peter and John had set out together to go to the place; when John, outrunning Peter,

Peter, and going into the sepulchre, judged, from the manner in which he saw the grave cloaths disposed of, that the body had not been carried away by force, but that there had been a real resurrection.

Peter, however, does not seem to have been convinced of it till Jesus appeared to himself, which he did sometime on that day, after he had first appeared to Mary Magdalen, and by her had sent a message to the apostles, informing them that he would give them the meeting in Galilee.

After this he appeared to two of the disciples as they were walking to a village in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The same evening he appeared as unexpectedly to all the apostles, except Thomas; the Sunday following to him with them, and some time after in Galilee to Peter, and others who were in a ship fishing, and then to more than five hundred of the disciples at once. He also appeared separately to James, but when or where is not certain. Lastly, he met the apostles, and many others, after their return to Jerusalem; and having conversed with them at leisure, and conducted them as far as the mount of Olives, he ascended above the clouds in their sight; two angels standing by, and informing those who were present, that in the same manner in which they then saw Jesus going up to heaven, they would see him return again from heaven.

The enemies of christianity frequently ask why Jesus did not appear to the leading men of the Jewish nation, after he was risen from the dead. But considering the part which they had acted, this would have had the appearance of an insult, unbecoming the dignity of our Lord's character; and the evidence of his resurrection, which, if they had been so disposed, they might easily have made themselves acquainted with, was sufficient to satisfy all who were truly unprejudiced. Besides, had such an appearance as unbelievers now demand actually convinced all the Jewish rulers, and the whole nation, so that they had all immediately become christians, the story would have been less credible at this day, and in all future time. For it might then have been said, with great plausibility, that the whole might have been a fabrication of the Jews, and that the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus had never been rigorously examined at the time. But no such objection can now be made to this important part of the christian history. It is now evident that it was the interest both of the friends and of the enemies of christianity to examine most rigorously into the truth of the resurrection, and that the belief of it continued to gain ground notwithstanding. They who were then the enemies of christianity would, no doubt, have refuted the story if it had been in their power; and



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and being the leading men of the country, they had every advantage for so doing. On the other hand, the friends of christianity would not have sacrificed their fortunes, their liberty, and their lives, for the truth of a fact, of which they had not had the most convincing evidence.

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### SECTION. II.

*From the Ascension of Jesus to the Conversion of Paul.*

THE direction that Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension was, that they should continue at Jerusalem till they should receive the gift of the holy spirit, and be thereby *endued with power from on high*. In consequence of this, they associated together, to the number of about one hundred and twenty, and at the motion of Peter, they, by prayer and casting of lots, chose Matthias to succeed Judas in the office of apostle, there being another candidate, whose name was Joseph called also Barsabas, and surnamed Justus. The requisites to the office of apostle were their having attended Jesus from the beginning of his ministry till

till his ascension, and especially their having been witnesses of his resurrection. Acts i. 26.

On the day of pentecost, ten days after the ascension, the apostles and other disciples being assembled as usual in one room, pretty early in the morning, the promise of their master was fulfilled by what was called *the descent of the holy spirit* upon them all. There was the sound of a *rushing mighty wind*, filling the whole house, and the appearance of fire upon the heads of all the company, followed by a power of speaking in languages which they had not learned, and so intelligibly, that a great number of various nations, drawn together by the report, perfectly understood what they said; and were astonished above measure to hear persons who were well known to be Galileans and unlearned, speak the praises of God in such a variety of languages.

Some of the croud, who were probably ignorant of any language except their own, hearing voices that were unintelligible to them, said that the disciples were drunk. But Peter, who heard this remark, began to speak to the multitude, and observe, that what they had heard could not be the effect of drunkenness, because it was early in the day, when it was not customary for any persons to be intoxicated. This was a proper answer to those who did not understand the languages in which the  
disciples

disciples spoke. Others must have been abundantly convinced, that the effect of intoxication could not be the distinct speaking of languages which men had never learned.

After this, Peter informing them that the scene at which they were present was an event foretold by the prophet Joel, began to assure them of the resurrection of Jesus, whom they had crucified, of which himself and all his company were witnesses; and that it was in fulfilment of his promise that, being now exalted at the right hand of God, he had imparted to them this gift of the holy spirit. In confirmation of their evidence of the resurrection, he likewise observed that it was agreeable to the scriptures, that the Messiah should die and rise again. Of this event he said that they, who were the best acquainted with him, and had repeatedly seen and conversed with him, were the most proper witnesses; but as to his *miracles* whilst he was alive, and which proved him to be a prophet (or as he expressed himself, *a man approved of God, by miracles and wonders, and signs which God, did by him*) he appealed to themselves, since they had been wrought among them, and had never been questioned. After this he exhorted them to repent of their sins, and be baptized; assuring them that then they would receive the same gift of the holy

holy spirit which had been imparted to himself and his companions.

Such an effect was produced by this extraordinary appearance, and the speech of Peter, appealing to their own perfect knowledge of the miracles of Jesus; that about three thousand persons openly joined them and were baptized, making one body with them; and to express their harmony and fellowship, the rich freely imparted of their superfluity to the poor, and many of them even sold their estates, to make a common stock for that benevolent purpose. From this time many miracles (though they are not particularly specified in the history) being wrought by the apostles, numbers were profelyted every day; and their behaviour was so irreproachable, that they were held in high esteem by those of the people who did not openly join them. Acts ii.

Nothing of this, it is easy to observe, could possibly have taken place, if it had been in the power of the chief rulers, and the enemies of Jesus, to have denied either his miracles, or those of the apostles, and especially if they could have refuted their account of his resurrection. That they would have done every thing that was in their power to disprove all these, we cannot doubt, when we consider how inveterate they had just before shewn themselves against Jesus; carrying their rage so far

far as to cause him to be put to death, though they could prove nothing criminal against him. In these circumstances, the miracles of Jesus and of the apostles being unquestioned, and the testimony of such a number of persons, the most competent witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, being unanimous, and uncontradicted, it is no wonder that new converts were continually made; and that the heads of the nation were for a time over-awed, and, made no opposition, though they were struck with mortification, and filled with rage. At the same time it must be observed, that the strong prejudice in favour of the Messiah being a temporal prince, affecting the common people as well as their rulers, nothing but the most irresistible evidence could have made them abandon so favourite an idea, and openly profess their faith in the messiahship of a man who had been crucified, and whom they could not expect to see any more in this world.

Some time after, as Peter and John were going to the temple, at the time of evening prayer (or our three in the afternoon) a man known to have been a cripple from his birth, and who sat day after day at the gate of the temple to ask alms, begged their charity, as well as that of others who were entering into the temple. On this, Peter, looking earnestly on him, and feeling, no doubt, a divine impulse

impulse on his mind; said, "Silver and gold I have none but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk;" immediately on which the poor man finding that he had the perfect use of his limbs, leaped up, and stood upright; going with them into the temple, shewing the greatest agility, and praising God.

This being done in the presence of a great multitude, who well knew the condition he had been in (for he was forty years old, and his disease such as was evidently incurable by any natural means) and therefore satisfied that a real miracle had been wrought, Peter improved the occasion to address them to the same purport as before; informing them that it was by no power of *his own* that the man who then stood before them had been healed, but by that power of God, by which he confirmed the divine mission of Jesus, whom they had killed, but whom God had raised to life; of which Peter again assured them that he and his brethren were witnesses; and that, this Jesus being now ascended into heaven, would continue there till the time of the restitution of all things. Many of the persons present were greatly impressed by his discourse, and made public profession of the christian faith,

faith, so that then the number of the disciples, exclusive of the women among them, was about five thousand. Acts iii. 4.

The governor of the temple, and the Sadducees, seeing the crowds in the place, and being exceedingly mortified at these effects of the preaching of the apostles, could not restrain themselves any longer, and apprehended them. It being then evening, they were brought the next morning before the high-priest and the council, who asked them by what power, and by what name, they had cured this man. On this Peter boldly addressed the court, and told them that it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but, whom God had raised from the dead, that the cure had been effected; intimating that it was the power of God giving testimony to his divine mission and theirs.

The court seeing the boldness of Peter and John, whom they knew to be unlearned men, and not used to speak in public, and the miracle being unquestionable (the man upon whom it had been wrought being present) were a little disconcerted, and ordered the apostles to withdraw, while they conferred upon the subject. Not being able to deny the fact, they agreed upon nothing but to charge them not to preach any more in the name

of Jesus. But Peter and John having received this injunction, openly refused to pay any regard to it, and appealed to themselves, whether they ought not to obey God, by whose authority they preached, rather than man. Unable to make any reply to this, the judges only repeated their threats, without venturing to inflict any punishment upon them; being restrained by their fear of the people, who glorified God for what was done. Acts iv. 21.

Being thus dismissed, the apostles went to their brethren, and gave them an account of all that had passed, on which they joined in solemn prayer and thanksgiving to God; when, to encourage them the more, the room in which they were assembled was shaken again, as it had been on the day of pentecost, and they were all filled with the holy spirit as at the first; so that they preached the gospel, or the doctrine of the resurrection and messiahship of Jesus, with all boldness, notwithstanding the threats of the rulers, who at that time durst not put them in execution.

The infant church, enjoying this peace, went on increasing in numbers and in the exercise of every virtue, with an ardour peculiar to that new state of things, in which all who openly embraced christianity, with very few exceptions, did it from principle, and with a determination to postpone every



every other consideration to that of their new profession. Considering themselves as heirs of future glory and immortality, they devoted all their time, talents, and fortune to the public cause. One instance in particular is mentioned, that of Barnabas, a Levite, and a native of Cyprus; who having an estate in that island, sold it, and gave the value of it to the apostles, to go to the common stock. Acts iv. 36.

Notwithstanding the genuine zeal, uprightness, and integrity, of the great body of christians in this early period, we have in it an example of one man and his wife, viz. Ananias and Sapphira, who either with a view to acquire the reputation of disinterestedness, or on the pretence of giving up their all, to avail themselves of the common fund, sold an estate, and bringing to the apostles part of the price, told them that it was the whole. As it was of great consequence that the christian church should not at this time harbour any persons of such a character, it pleased the divine Being to make a signal example of these persons, who had agreed in the intended fraud.

Ananias was first publicly called upon by Peter, to say whether the sum which he had brought in was the whole price of his estate; and upon his saying that it was, Peter (prompted on doubt by the spirit of God) charged him with hypocrisy, and attempting to deceive not only man, but God. He then expostulated with him

on the uselessness of the lie he had told, as he had been under no necessity either to sell his estate, or to give any part of it after it was sold. Immediately upon this, Ananias fell down dead before the company. A little time after this, his wife, coming in before she had been informed of any thing that had passed respecting her husband, was asked the same question that had been put to him, and giving the same answer, she also fell down dead. A miracle of this awful kind could not fail to make a deep impression upon all. It would tend to convince all people that the profession of christianity was a serious thing, and those who had any sinister views would be deterred from joining the body of christians. Acts v.

At this time the ministry of the apostles was honoured in as distinguishing a manner as that of Jesus had been, many miracles being wrought by the apostles, and especially by Peter, who always took the lead among them. Such was the fame of his miracles, that persons *brought their sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter might reach some of them* (Acts v. 15) Great numbers also came from towns in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, bringing their sick, and among them dæmoniacs; and none of them returned without a perfect cure.

This could not be done without exciting the rage of the rulers of the nation, whose prejudices wer

were such as nothing could conciliate. They, therefore, caused the apostles to be apprehended, and put into the common prison. But this was the occasion of a new miracle, and of a most extraordinary kind. For an angel opened the prison doors, and leading them out, bade them go, and preach openly in the temple, the place of greatest concourse, as they had done before. This accordingly they did not fail to do; and to the great surprize of their judges, when they were assembled the next morning, and had given orders for their prisoners to be brought before them, they were told that the very persons whom they had confined the day before were at that time teaching openly in the temple.

After this the judges could not think of attempting to take them any more by force. Indeed, the apostles were then so popular, that the officers would have been stoned if they had laid violent hands upon them. They, therefore, brought them without violence into the court, where being charged with acting contrary to the orders that had been given them, (*viz. not to preach any more in the name of Jesus*) Peter replied, that he had obeyed God in what he had done, and again asserted the dignity of Jesus, whom they had crucified, as risen from the dead, and advanced to the right hand of God. He added, that not  
only

only were he and his brethren witnesses of the resurrection, but the spirit of God himself, in the miraculous powers which were imparted to all the believers.

Being provoked to the highest degree by this bold answer, the judges were thinking to put the apostles to death, as they had done Jesus; but Gamaliel, one of their body, and a celebrated teacher of the law, advised them (after the apostles were withdrawn) not to interfere in the business saying; that if the thing was of God, it would be in vain for them to oppose it, and if it was not, it would soon come to nothing. It seems, however, that the judges thought it necessary not to dismiss them without doing something to enforce their authority. They therefore ordered them to be beaten, which was always done in open court. In this the apostles even rejoiced, and leaving the tribunal, they preached the gospel with as much zeal as ever, both publicly in the temple, and also in private houses. Acts v.

The Jewish rulers, being probably confounded at this unexpected boldness of the apostles, and their own ineffectual attempts to restrain them, seem to have followed the advice of Gamaliel for some time, and to have suffered them to preach without molestation; and this was attended with a great increase of the disciples, not only in Jerusalem and Judæa, but among Jews in distant countries. For

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we find the widows of Grecians, as well as of Hebrews (Acts vi. 1.) applying for relief out of the common fund, and the former complaining that they were neglected out of respect to the latter. On this the apostles, who, like Moses in a similar situation, had given their attention to every thing that concerned christianity, and had even superintended this distribution, relieved themselves of that burden, by requesting that the society would chuse seven men of reputation among them, to attend to this and other secular affairs, while they confined themselves to the business of preaching and instruction. This proposal being approved of, the following seven persons were chosen, viz. Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch. These were set apart for their office by prayer, and by the apostles solemnly laying their hands upon them; an action which always seems to have accompanied praying for particular persons.

In this state of things the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly (Acts vi. 7.) and the converts were not all of them of the warmer kind of people, but a great number of priests joined their society. In this state it is probable that things continued some time, perhaps from A. D. 29, in which Jesus died, to A. D. 33, when christianity

christianity must have gotten a pretty firm establishment; so that its enemies, the Jewish rulers, must have perceived that their forbearance had not been at all favourable to them. They had, therefore, recourse once more to severity, taking occasion from the great zeal of Stephen one of the seven deacons; who not confining his attention to secular matters, but having exerted himself also in preaching (which was accompanied with many miracles) drew upon himself the peculiar indignation of the opposite party. They might also think that they should succeed better in the prosecution of him, who was an inferior person, than they had done in that of the apostles.

This fresh persecution could not have been carried on without the connivance of Pilate, the Roman governor; but as he had before abandoned Jesus, to them; and his conduct in other respects had rendered him very unpopular, it is probable that, in hope of gaining them in some measure, and preventing their complaints of his mal-administration, he was willing to sacrifice to them the followers of Jesus, as he had done Jesus himself. Besides, he must by this time have seen that the christians were a passive inoffensive set of men, who were not likely to act openly against him, either by their complaints at Rome, or their opposition in the province.

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The zealous Jews, having nothing to apprehend from the interference of the governor, now gave full scope to their rage in the persecution of the christians; and Stephen happening to be engaged in a dispute with some zealous Jews (among whom were some from Cilicia, and among them, probably, Saul of Tarsus) and overpowering them with his arguments, they, knowing no other method of silencing him, and sensible that the Sanhedrim was in their favour, accused him before that court of the crime of *blasphemy against Moses and against God*, suborning certain persons, who declared that they had heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the city of Jerusalem, and change the laws of Moses.

Instead of replying to this particular accusation, which was destitute of all proof, Stephen, with perfect presence of mind, and with a countenance so full of courage and zeal, that it was compared to that of an angel, in a speech of considerable length, recited the history of the Hebrew nation from the beginning; shewing his judges how apt they had always been to reject and ill-treat the messengers whom God had from time to time sent to them, and boldly telling them, they were now treading in the steps of their ancestors, by rejecting Jesus, in the murder of whom they had resisted God himself who spake by him.

On hearing these keen but just reproaches, the members of the court, unable to contain themselves any longer, passed sentence of death upon him, as a blasphemer. But he, unmoved by this determination, and directing his eyes upwards, was favoured with a view of the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ sitting on his right hand. On his declaring this, they stopped their ears; as at the hearing of blasphemy, and with the most indecent haste and violence hurried him to a place out of the city, where he was stoned to death; while he, with perfect composure (according to the custom of dying persons addressing their nearest friends) said aloud (the vision he had had impressing his mind, and occupying all his thoughts) "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," or last breath; adding in the temper of his dying master, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." After this, with as much apparent satisfaction and tranquility as if he was falling asleep, he expired. His friends were permitted to carry him away, and bury him with the usual ceremonies of lamentation, which was very great. The chief actor in this tragedy was Saul of Tarsus in Cilicia, and at his feet the persons who threw the stones laid their cloaths, which they put off that they might not be incumbered in throwing them. Acts vii.

The enemies of christianity having succeeded  
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in accomplishing the death of Stephen, were encouraged to persevere in the persecution of the disciples ; and Saul, who was distinguished by his zeal for the laws of Moses against those whom he thought to infringe upon them, was the most active instrument of their violence, entering into private houses, and apprehending persons of all conditions ; and without regard to the distinction of sex, he committed them promiscuously to prison. In consequence of this persecution, many christians were dispersed into distant places, and by this means the knowledge of the gospel was extended farther than it would otherwise have been in the same time. But notwithstanding this danger, all the apostles chose to remain at Jerusalem ; and their enemies perhaps thought that, as they had been delivered in a miraculous manner before, it would be in vain to attempt doing any thing against them.

Among other persons who were driven from Jerusalem by this persecution, Philip (whose name appears next to that of Stephen in the list of the seven deacons, or stewards) went and preached in Samaria, where the Jews had no power ; and as his preaching was accompanied with the working of miracles, especially in the cure of persons afflicted with the palsy, some who were incurably lame, and some demoniacs, he made many converts,  
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and there was a general joy in their chief city. Here he met with a man whose name is often mentioned by the early christian writers, viz. Simon, to which is commonly added the epithet of *Magus*, on account of the magical arts to which he pretended.

He was in reality a philosopher of what is usually called the *oriental sect*, the leading principle of which was, that from the supreme mind there sprang, by way of emanation, various intelligences, and from these others of the same nature, but less perfect. The most exalted of these derived beings were supposed capable of the highest offices, even that of making worlds. It was also thought that they occasionally descended from the empyreal regions, which they usually occupied, and for great and good purposes animated the bodies of men, and other creatures, in the same manner as daemons were supposed to take possession of men for bad purposes. The people of Samaria entertained a notion (encouraged, no doubt by Simon himself) that he was one of those superior intelligences; for, it is said, that they thought him to be *the great power of God*, and he kept up this high opinion of himself by various tricks and impositions, probably such as the Egyptian priests and magicians were famous for. Simon, however, seeing the miracles of Philip to be greatly superior to any thing

thing that he could pretend to, became a convert to his doctrine, and was baptized.

The christians at Jerusalem hearing of the many converts made at Samaria by the preaching of Philip, sent to them the apostles Peter and John, that by their prayers, and the laying on of their hands, those who had been baptized might receive the holy spirit, or be endued with the gifts of speaking in languages which they had not learned; the conferring of this power being a privilege which it pleased divine providence to reserve for the apostles. Accordingly, by means of these apostles, the Samaritan converts did receive the holy spirit; and thus appearing to Simon, as it naturally would, a thing of more wonderful nature than any thing that he had seen before, observing also that it was peculiar to the apostles to impart this power, and thinking that they could bestow it upon others, he offered them a sum of money to share it with them. To this proposal Peter, with great indignation, replied, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money." He moreover added, that he knew nothing of the profession that he had taken upon himself, and exhorted him to repent of his bad disposition and unworthy purpose. On this Simon seemed to be affected with a just remorse, and intreated the apostle to pray for

for him, that the doom which he had announced might not be inflicted upon him.

It is probable, however, that this Simon afterwards deserted the profession of christianity, and endeavoured to draw followers to himself, as before. For, according to christian tradition, he every where opposed the spread of the gospel, and even held public disputations with Peter on the subject. But several of his disciples held the principles of his philosophy together with the profession of christianity, and were distinguished by the appellation of *Gnostics*, from the boasts which they made of their superior knowledge. From these persons the apostles, as we shall see, met with great opposition; and many of them formed societies of their own, in consequence of which they had the appellation of *heretics*, or *separatists*. Being again divided and subdivided among themselves, they formed a great variety of sects of which an account will be given in its proper place.

After this, Peter and John, having preached in several villages of the Samaritans, returned to Jerusalem; but, Philip, who remained there, had a divine impulse to go to the south, into the desert through which lay the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. There he met with an eunuch, an officer of great authority under Candace, queen of Ethiopia, who being a Jew, or a proselyte, had been attending

tending one of the public festivals at Jerusalem, and was then sitting in his chariot, and reading in the prophecy of Isaiah. Philip being ordered by the spirit of God to place himself in the way of the chariot, heard him reading, and took the liberty to ask him if he understood what he had read; and the eunuch, frankly acknowledging his want of an interpreter, desired Philip to get up into the chariot, and sit with him, which he readily did. The passage he had been reading was in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet describes a person who was led as a *sheep to the slaughter*, and who, like a *lamb dumb before his shearers*, opened not his mouth. This character Philip applied to Jesus, and from this he took occasion to explain to him the doctrine of the divine mission, the death, and resurrection of Christ; adding, no doubt, that persons were initiated into his religion by baptism.

Afterwards, coming to a place where there was water, the eunuch expressed a desire of being baptized, to which Philip replied, that there could be no objection to it, if he was a believer in what he had informed him of. On this the eunuch declared his belief that Jesus was the son of God, or the Messiah, which expressed all that was essential to a christian, and therefore, both of them alighting from the chariot, Philip baptized him. The eunuch

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was farther confirmed in his faith by a miracle of an extraordinary nature. For after his baptism Philip was taken from him by the spirit, or power of God, so that he disappeared from his sight ; on which he pursued his journey with peculiar joy and satisfaction of mind. Philip found himself at Azotus, and preaching the gospel at that place, and all along the sea-coast, he came at length to Cæsarea. Acts viii.

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### SECTION III.

*From the Conversion of Paul to the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles*

**F**ROM the death of Stephen (probably A. D. 33) to the accession of Caligula to the Roman Empire, A. D. 37, the rulers of the Jews carried on an active and unrelenting persecution of the christians, in which to A. D. 35, Saul was their chief instrument ; but then a stop was put to his furious career by a most extraordinary interposition

### SEC. III. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 49

sition of divine providence. Of his own accord, Saul had applied to the high priest for orders to go to Damascus in search of christians, that he might bring them from that city bound to Jerusalem. For the severity of this persecution had driven christian preachers (and at that time every christian might be said to be a preacher) to this city, and others still more distant from Judea, where, their zeal not abating, but being rather increased, they endeavoured to make as many proselytes as they could; and the report of those in Damascus brought Saul thither.

As Saul drew near the city, his rage, no doubt, increasing with the near prospect of his prey, he found himself surrounded by an extraordinary light from heaven, and falling to the ground, he heard a voice pronouncing these words, *Saul, Saul, why, persecutest thou me*; to which, when he replied, *Who art thou, Lord* (which shews that he was not divested of all presence of mind) he received for answer, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad*; representing, by this familiar proverb, the impossibility of succeeding in his enterprize to extirpate christianity. Astonished at this reply, and finding the fatal mistake he had been under, he said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do*; to which he had this answer, *Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what*

*thou shalt do.* With this the vision ended. The companions of Saul had all this time been present and were no doubt, greatly amazed, hearing the sound of a voice, though (perhaps not being near enough) not distinguishing the words that were pronounced, and seeing no person from whom they could proceed. Saul, being risen from the ground and finding himself unable to see, was conducted into the city, where he passed three days and nights without eating or drinking, as well as without sight.

In this interval of darkness and fasting, his mind would be sufficiently tranquilized, and his devotion (of the principle of which he was never divested) would be peculiarly ardent; and being then well assured of the resurrection of Jesus, by whom he had been accosted, and consequently of the truth of christianity, he prayed for farther instruction (agreeably to the promise that had been made him) and no doubt also for the restoration of his sight. At this time Jesus also appeared to a disciple in Damascus, of the name of Ananias, and directing him to the place where Paul was, informed him that he also had been favoured with a vision, in which he was told that a person of the name of Ananias would visit him, and restore him to his sight. On this Ananias, without refusing to obey, expressed his surprize at the commission, considering



### SEC. III. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 51

considering how great a persecutor of the christians Saul had been, and with what views he was then come to Damascus. But Jesus replied, *He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, as well as the children of Israel*; adding that he should farther appear to him, and apprise him of all that he should suffer in his cause.

On this, without farther hesitation. Ananias went to the house where Saul was, and accosting him with the appellation of *brother*, put his hands upon him, and said, *the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way, has sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the holy Spirit*. With this something like scales fell from his eyes, by which he recovered his sight. He was then baptized, and continued some time with his fellow christians at Damascus; his former companions having probably soon left him, confounded at what they had seen, and probably without understanding much of the matter.

The same zeal which had prompted Saul to persecute the christians now led him to be as warm an advocate for their cause. Accordingly, he soon began to preach in the synagogues of Damascus, maintaining that Jesus was the Messiah, at which all who heard him were astonished, knowing his preceding character and conduct. But he per-  
sisted

sisted in his preaching, and by his arguments he confounded the bigoted Jews of that place, who would not fail to be highly provoked at the desertion of their former champion. They were so much enraged, that they formed a design to take away his life, and lay in wait at the gates of the city day and night for that purpose. But his friends, being apprized of it, contrived to let him down from the wall of the city in a basket, so that he escaped their pursuit.

Saul having thus escaped from the hands of his enemies, preached in the neighbouring country of Arabia a great part of three years, after which he returned to Damascus, and then went to Jerusalem. There the disciples were, very naturally, afraid of him, doubting the reality of his conversion; till Barnabas, who (being of Cyprus, an island not far from Tarsus the native place of Saul) had probably some previous knowledge of him, and had by himself been acquainted with the more recent events of his life, had answered for the truth of his extraordinary narrative. By him he was introduced to the apostles Peter and James, and with them he continued fifteen days. At Jerusalem Saul preached with the same assiduity and boldness as he had done at Damascus, disputing particularly with those who, like himself, came from those countries in which the Greek language

### SEC. III. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 53

language was spoken. But they being greatly exasperated against him, as the Jews of Damascus had been, endeavoured also to take his life; and here likewise his friends, being apprized of their intention, interposed, and conducted him to Cæsarea, and thence he went to Tarsus. Acts ix. 21.

Saul had begun, and continued, to preach these three years without any communication with the apostles; and when they conversed with him they found that he was as well acquainted with the christian doctrine as themselves. Jesus, who had appeared to him before his arrival at Damascus, and likewise in that town before he had recovered his sight, had probably, some time afterwards, appeared to him again, and for a longer time; to give him more satisfaction concerning the reality of his resurrection, and also to give him particular instructions concerning every thing that he was to teach in his name. By this he was qualified to be an apostle, as well as those who had been appointed to that high office before the death of Jesus; and his commission relating chiefly to the Gentiles, he obtained the peculiar title of the *apostle of the Gentiles*, in which character we shall soon find that he greatly distinguished himself; having carried the knowledge of the gospel farther than any other apostle, and having found-  
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ed more churches in distant countries than perhaps all the other apostles besides. About this time, viz. A.D. 37, the emperor Tiberius, in whose reign Jesus had been crucified, died, and was succeeded by Caligula, a mad and brutal tyrant, who, among other extravagancies, took into his head to be worshipped as a god, by all the people in the empire. The Gentile nations having been accustomed to worship dead men, and the emperors J. Cæsar and Augustus having had divine honours decreed to them presently after their deaths, this worship of a living man would not to them appear so extraordinary a thing; though they might think this particular emperor, notwithstanding his power, unworthy of so great an honour. But to the Jews, the great object of whose religion it was to worship no other than the one true God, the maker of heaven and earth, this difficulty was of a most serious nature; and when Petronius the governor of Syria (to which the government of Judea was subordinate) announced the orders he had received from Rome, and informed them that a statue of the emperor must absolutely be set up in the temple; and when they saw him at Tiberias at the head of an army sufficient to enforce the order, many thousands of the Jews came, without arms, to entreat that he would not prophane their temple, expressing

ing their willingness to die rather than see the order executed. They even suspended the labours of agriculture, though it was then seed time, to shew how indifferent they were about what might become of themselves, or their country, while a thing of such infinitely more moment was depending. The governor, moved by their submissive behaviour, suspended the execution of the order he had received, till he had given the emperor more particular information concerning his peculiar circumstances with respect to it; and by means of king Agrippa (who had been sent to Rome to complain of the cruelties of Pilate, and who had cultivated the friendship of Caligula) he was for the present diverted from his purpose; though it is probable that nothing but his death would have given the Jews any effectual relief in this case\*.

By Caligula this Agrippa (who was the grandson of Herod the Great, by Aristobulus) was made king of the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip, who had died some time before without heirs, and his province of Trachonitis had been annexed to that of Syria. Herodias, the profligate and ambitious wife of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, who had procured the death of John the baptist, stung with envy to see the nephew of her husband honoured with the title

\*Josephus's Wars of the Jews. B. 2. C. 8. 9.

title of *king*, while he remained a simple *tetrarch*, could not rest till she had prevailed upon him to go to Rome to solicit the same title for himself. She accompanied him, but before their arrival the king had sent letters to Rome, accusing him of having conspired with the Parthians against the empire; in consequence of which, Caligula banished both Herod and his wife to Lyons in Gaul, and gave his tetrarchy to Agrippa. In the reign of this emperor Pilate did not escape the persecution of the Jews, as he had done under Tiberius, but was banished to Vienne in Gaul, where, according to Eusebius, he, in despair, laid violent hands upon himself\*.

It was probably owing to the apprehension which the Jews were under concerning the orders of Caligula, that, being wholly occupied about their own safety, they suspended the persecution of the Christians, in consequence of which the church enjoyed that *rest throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria*, which is mentioned Acts ix. 31. and which was attended with a great increase of the disciples. During this interval, Peter, being under no restraint to go wherever he pleased, visited the disciples at Lydda, where he restored to health a person of the name of Eneas, who

\*Hist. L. ii. C. vii. p. 55.

### SEC. III. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 57

who was paralytic, and had kept his bed eight years. He then went to Joppa, where he raised to life a christian woman of excellent character, and distinguished for her charity to the poor, and other virtues, of the name of Tabitha (in Greek Dorcas) in this place Peter continued some time, residing with one Simon a tanner. Acts ix. 43.

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### SECTION IV.

*From the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles to the Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem.*

IN all the preceding period, comprising the space of ten years after the death of Jesus, the apostles had confined the preaching of the gospel to the Jews, and they seem to have had no idea of extending it to the Gentiles, unless they should have first become profelytes to Judaism, so as to be circumcised, and conform to the laws of Moses. But a sufficient harvest, as we may say, of the Jews being now gathered in, it pleased the divine Being to begin the greater harvest of the gentile

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world; and Peter, who had been the first preacher of the gospel to the former, had also the honour of being first employed to preach to the latter.

Many of the heathens residing in or near Judea, were at that time so much impressed with the superiority of the Jewish religion over that in which they had been educated, that though they did not chuse to become proper proselytes, they were convinced of the absurdity of idolatry, and in private worshipped only the true God of the Jews; and many of these persons were remarkable for their devotion and benevolence. A person of this character, viz. Cornelius, a Roman centurion residing at Cæsarea (the usual abode of the governors of the province) one who is described\*, as *fearing God with all his house, who gave alms to the people, and prayed to God always* (by which is probably meant at all the usual hours at which the Jews offered their devotions) was praying at the ninth hour (three in the afternoon with us) which was the time of evening sacrifice in the temple; when an angel appeared to him, informing him that his prayers and alms were accepted of God, and ordering him to send to Joppa for Peter, who would give him farther information. As the supernatural appearance to Paul was at midday, so this to Cornelius

\*Acts x. 2.



Cornelius was not in the night, but at a time which can afford no suspicion of a man's being subject to any illusion. On this he sent two of his household servants, and also a devout soldier who attended upon his person, after he had given them an account of the important errand on which they were to go.

Before their arrival, Peter, being at prayer on the house top at noon, became very hungry; and while dinner was preparing for him, he had a trance, in which he saw a large sheet let down from heaven by its four corners, and in it all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, and he heard a voice saying to him, *Rise Peter kill and eat.* To this he replied, that he had never eaten any thing which according to the law of Moses was unclean; but to this he received for answer, *What God has cleansed call not thou unclean.* This vision, with all its circumstances, was repeated three times, and then the sheet seemed to be drawn up into heaven.

When Peter was recovered from his trance, and was considering with himself what it could mean, the three men dispatched by Cornelius knocked at the gate of the house, and the spirit of God informed him that they were enquiring for him, and bade him go along with them, for that he had sent them. The men, being introduced to  
Peter,

Peter, delivered their message; and the next day Peter, accompanied by some disciples from Joppa, set out with them, and the day following being arrived at Cæsarea, they found Cornelius with many of his friends waiting for him.

On entering the room, Peter told them, that though it was not held lawful for a Jew to associate with Gentiles, he had been directed by God to consider no man as unclean, or unfit for his society; and therefore had come without hesitation when he was sent for. In return, Cornelius, in a distinct account of his vision, gave the reasons why he had sent for him; and Peter, not doubting but he was to give this company an account of the gospel, of which he was an apostle, recited to them the heads of the doctrine, the miracles, and especially the resurrection of Jesus, of which he said that himself and many others were witnesses; and as these Gentiles were not acquainted with the Jewish religion, he moreover informed them that Jesus was appointed to be the final judge of the world, and that the ancient prophets bore witness to him.

While Peter was giving this account of the christian doctrine (to which Cornelius and his friends, no doubt, gave the firmest assent, especially as Peter appealed to their own knowledge, for the truth of many of the facts) the spirit of God fell upon them, as it had done upon the Jewish disciples

disciples at the first, and they began to speak the praises of God in unknown tongues. This appearance greatly surprised Peter and his friends; and seeing that God had already evidently given them the seal of the true disciples, Peter observed that there could be no impropriety in baptizing them. This being performed at their request, Peter and his companions continued some days longer with them.

Peter had, no doubt, expected that Cornelius and his friends were to have become profelytes to Judaism before they could be baptized, and received into the body of christians; and the disciples at Jerusalem, having the same idea, and not having been informed of all the particulars which had led to the baptizing of Cornelius, but only that Peter had baptized persons who were uncircumcised, were much displeased with him for it. To satisfy them, Peter, when he was returned to Jerusalem (which he probably had done to give the christians there an account of so extraordinary an event) related distinctly all that he had seen or done with relation to it; after which, as they could not but own that the hand of God was in it, they rejoiced, notwithstanding their former prejudices, that God had opened a door for the admission of Gentiles into the christian church. Still, however, we shall find that many of the more  
zealous

zealous Jewish christians were never thoroughly reconciled to the Gentile christians, so far were they from believing the infallibility of an apostle as such\*.

At this time the number of the disciples was much increased in the neighbourhood of Antioch, by the preaching of many persons who had been driven from Jerusalem by the persecution in which Stephen had been put to death; and the church at Jerusalem, hearing of this, sent Barnabas to Antioch; and he, being full of zeal, greatly encouraged them to persevere in the profession of the gospel. Having strengthened the disciples in that city and added to the number of them, he went to seek Saul, who was at that time in his native city Tarsus, in the neighbourhood of which he had been preaching; and having brought him to Antioch they continued preaching a whole year, and made many converts. These bearing at that time a sensible proportion to the other inhabitants of the place, came now to be distinguished by the peculiar name of *christians*, an appellation, which, though probably given by their enemies, was cheerfully received by all the disciples of Jesus.

At this time there came from Jerusalem to Antioch some christians who had the gift of prophecy, and especially one Agabus, who was inspired

red to foretel a great famine through all the Roman empire, which happened in the reign of Claudius; and the disciples, on the apprehension of it, determined to send relief to their brethren in Judea. Accordingly, a collection being made for that benevolent purpose, it was sent to the elders of the church by Barnabas and Saul\*. In this famine Helena, queen of Adiabene in Syria, bought corn at a great expence in Egypt, and distributed it to the Jews at Jerusalem†.

It is something remarkable that notwithstanding the admission of Cornelius and his friends into the number of disciples by baptism, and the approbation of Peter's conduct in this business by the church at Jerusalem, neither Peter himself, nor any other christians, appear to have endeavoured to make other converts among the Gentiles. Perhaps they waited for some more express authority for it. In the mean time, however, it seems that Paul (which was the name that Saul afterwards bore, and which I shall from this time give him) had preached to Gentiles in the neighbourhood of Tarsus and Antioch; and for this he had perhaps received from Jesus in person, an express commission, either while he was preaching in Arabia, or on this particular occasion, Or,  
as

\*Acts xi. 30.

† Euseb. Hist. L. 3. C. 13. p. 60

as it had been intimated to him at his baptism, that he was to be sent to the Gentiles, on hearing that Peter had baptized Cornelius, he might think himself sufficiently authorized; without receiving any particular commission for the purpose, to do what Peter (perhaps for fear of offending the Jews) had foreborne. What Paul had then done in this way, being in a country remote from Jerusalem, was not generally known there. But being sent thither upon this occasion, together with Barnabas, he informed the apostles in confidence, of what he had done with respect to preaching the gospel to Gentiles\*; but he said nothing of it to the church at large.

Among other converts from the gentiles was Titus, whom Paul took with him to Jerusalem, and, as he was not a Jew, he did not circumcise him; to which, as it should seem from Paul's account of this transaction, he had been advised; but he had peremptorily refused, lest it should be a precedent to enslave all future Gentile converts, by compelling them to observe the laws of Moses†. As to the chief of the apostles, Peter, James, and John, when they heard the account that Paul gave, perceiving that he had a special commission to preach to the gentiles, as Peter and the rest had to the Jews, they gave him and Barnabas the right hand

\*Gal. ii. 2.

† Gal. ii. 4.

### SEC. III. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 65

hand of fellowship, in wishing them the greatest success in their mission; only admonishing them to be mindful of the poor disciples at Jerusalem, and procure some contributions for them, which Paul himself had much at heart\*.

On the death of Caligula, A. D. 41, his uncle Claudius was made emperor; and as the senate had been induced to proclaim him by the address of Agrippa, who was then at Rome, among other marks of his gratitude, he not only confirmed him in the kingdom which had been given him by Caligula, but added to his territories Samaria and Judea, which had belonged to his grandfather. He also gave the kingdom of Chalcis in Syria to his brother Herod; and to oblige him the more, the emperor made several decrees in favour of the Jews, allowing them the same privileges which they had enjoyed through all the empire in the reign of Augustus.

Agrippa, who is also called Herod, on his arrival in Judea, did many things to ingratiate himself with his subjects; and to please them the more, he began a persecution against the christians, in which he beheaded James the brother of John, and the son of Zebedee, who was the first of the apostles that suffered martyrdom. He also caused Peter to be apprehended, and committed him to

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\*Gal. ii. 10.

the custody of two soldiers, one of them being chained to each of his hands, intending to have him executed after the passover; but it pleased God to deliver him from this danger, in the same manner in which he had been rescued on a former occasion. For in the night preceding the day on which he was to have been executed, an angel, attended with a great light, appeared in the prison, and Peter being asleep, he awakened him, and bade him rise and follow him; the chains at the same time falling from his hands. As they went, the gates of the prison opened to them of their own accord; and the angel leaving him, Peter found himself in the street alone. Then, but not before, Peter was satisfied that what had passed was no vision, but a reality. Going to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark the evangelist, he was received with great joy; and when he had told his friends in what manner he had been delivered from his imminent danger, he left the city. Herod, disappointed in his views, ordered the fol- who had been placed to guard Peter, to be put to death.

Afterwards, viz. A. D. 43, the same Herod Agrippa being at Cæsarea, a speech which he made there to some ambassadors from Tyre in Sidon was received with loud acclamations, and said to be the speech of God, and not of man. This  
falsome



fulsome adulation he had the vanity and impiety to receive ; but he was presently seized with a mortal disease similar to that of which his grandfather had died. For his body was in such a state that worms bred in it\*.

This Agrippa left a son seventeen years of age, who succeeded his father ; but being thought too young for the administration, it was given to Cuspius Fadus. After the death of his uncle Herod king of Chalcis, Claudius gave Agrippa that kingdom. But in the thirteenth year of his reign he took it from him, and gave him, instead of it, those provinces which had formed the tetrarchy of Philip, viz. Batanea, Trachonitis, and Abilene. Afterwards Nero gave him part of Galilee, including Tiberias, and Julias beyond Jordan.

This persecutor of the christians being removed, more converts were made, and Paul and Barnabas, having discharged their commission, returned to Antioch, taking with them Mark the evangelist. It was probably during this journey which Paul made to Jerusalem, fourteen years before he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, that, being in the temple, he had a trance, in which he imagined that he was caught up to heaven ; but what he heard there he says†, it was not lawful for him  
to

\*Acts xii. 23.

† Cor. xii. 4.

to declare. And lest he should be exalted above measure, by so distinguishing an honour, he had from that time some affliction, which he calls *a messenger of Satan*, from which he earnestly prayed to be relieved; but he only received for answer, that the power of God would be sufficient for him. What this affliction was he does not specify, but it was probably something that he apprehended would render his ministry less acceptable; and it is commonly thought to have been either an impediment in his speech, or something that rendered his personal appearance unpleasing. During this vision, in which Jesus appeared to him, he was ordered to make haste, and leave Jerusalem, because the Jews of that place would not receive his word, and he was told that he would be sent to a great distance among the Gentiles\*.

This intimation of Jesus to Paul was soon verified. For in the year following, viz. A. D. 45, during the public worship at Antioch, it was intimated to one of the company who had the spirit of prophecy, that Barnabas and Paul should be set apart for some special commission. Accordingly, being recommended to the blessing of God, by fasting and prayer, they departed, and in the first place went to Cyprus, the native place of Barnabas.

\*Acts xxiii. 17—21.

## SEC. VI. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 69

bas. The Roman governor of the island at that time was Sergius Paulus, a man of prudence and moderation, who hearing of these two missionaries expressed a desire to converse with them; but one Elymas, a Jew, who, like Simon Magus, practised magical arts, endeavoured to give the governor bad impressions of christianity; when Paul, moved no doubt by the spirit of God, after addressing him with great severity, told him that he would become blind for a season. This awful denunciation being immediately fulfilled, the governor was greatly struck with it, and declared himself a Christian\*.

Leaving Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas went to Perga in Pamphilia, and there Mark, discouraged as Paul thought, with the prospect of the difficulties which were before them, declined to accompany them any farther, and returned to Jerusalem. But they proceeded without him, and went to Antioch in Pisidia, where they began to preach in the Jewish synagogue. There Paul recited to his countrymen the promises of God to their fathers concerning the Messiah, shewing that those prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus, who had been crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead. In consequence of this, many of the religious

\*Acts xiii 12

gious Jews and proselytes became converts, and some Gentiles who were present expressing a wish to hear them again the next sabbath, almost the whole city crowded to them. This circumstance gave great offence to the zealous Jews, and by their interest with the leading men of the place, Paul and Barnabas were expelled from that country. Many converts, however, were made, especially among the Gentiles, and by them others were converted in the neighbouring places\*.

Leaving Antioch, they went to Iconium, and here also they made many converts both of Jews and Greeks, and many miracles were wrought by them there. But the party of the unbelieving Jews prevailing, they were driven from that place as they had been from Antioch, and fled to Lystra, and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia.

The history of their preaching at Lystra is particularly remarkable. At the gates of the city there sat a man who had been lame from his birth, like to him whom Peter had cured at the gate of the temple. Him Paul restored to the perfect use of his limbs; and the people, struck with the prodigy, immediately conceived that they must be two of their gods, who had visited the world in the form of men. taking Barnabas to be Jupiter, and Paul Mercury;

#### SEC. IV. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 71

Mercury; and with this idea they brought oxen with garlands, and were preparing to offer sacrifice to them, so that it was with difficulty that Paul, by an excellent speech, in which he told them that they were only men like themselves, who had come to turn them from their idol worship to that God who made them and all things, diverted them from their purpose. Notwithstanding this extraordinary miracle, some zealous Jews from Antioch and Iconium, where Paul and Barnabas had been preaching before, arriving there, they induced the people to drive them from the place, and even to stone Paul, so that he was taken up for dead. The people had probably been persuaded to think that they were dangerous people, possessed of the arts of magic, by which, though they might do some good, they would probably do more mischief\*.

From this place they went to Derbe, and having preached and made many disciples in that city, they proceeded no farther at this time, but returned by way of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, confirming the disciples they had made, and exhorting them not to be discouraged at the afflictions they might be called to endure, since they would have an abundant recompence in the kingdom

\*Acts xiv.

dom of heaven. They also appointed elders in every church, and recommending them by prayer to the divine blessing, they made a progress through Pisidia, Pamphilia, and Perga, to Attalia. From this last place they went by sea to Antioch in Syria, from which they had set out, where they gave the church an account of the success of their ministry; and here they continued some time.

In this place I must be indulged in making a few reflections. In preaching to the Jews, the great object of the apostles was to convince them, from their own scriptures, that Jesus was the Messiah. With respect to the proper fundamental doctrines of religion, such as the unity of God, his placability to returning sinners, and the resurrection of the dead, they had nothing to add to their knowledge, except that, the evidence of this last mentioned doctrine having been lost, it was now abundantly confirmed by the death and resurrection of Jesus, who also taught that the dead would be raised at his second glorious coming; that after the raising of the dead a change would take place in the living, that they would then be incorruptible, and continue to exist without any farther propagation of the species. With respect to the wicked we are taught to believe that they will rise again as well as the virtuous; but whether it  
will

#### SEC. IV. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 73

will rise again as well as the virtuous ; but whether it will be to an immortal life, we are not so explicitly informed.

The Gentiles had much more to learn of the apostles. They were to be brought off from their idolatrous fascinating rites, their licentious festivals, and a thousand absurd and debasing superstitions, to the belief of one God, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, the maker and preserver of all things. They had to learn the maxims of his moral government, as also much of their duty in this life, as well as every thing concerning their expectations in another. To hear such doctrines as the apostles could teach them on these most important subjects, confirmed by the decisive authority of miracles, must have struck the more considerate and well disposed among them in a manner of which, we who have been brought up in the belief of christianity, can hardly form an idea. To them the gospel would be indeed, what its name imports, viz. *good news*.

Heathens converted to christianity would see themselves and every thing around them, in a new and infinitely more important light, as under the moral government of God, and candidates for a happy immortality. With this persuasion, they would not value this life, or any thing that they could lose or suffer in it, whenever it should

come into competition with their interest in another. Accordingly, we shall find, in the sequel of this history, that many, who had been accustomed to the elegancies and luxuries of life, eagerly ran to martyrdom, even through torture generally preceded death. It is no wonder that the magistrates and other persons in the higher ranks of life, who gave little attention to the preaching of the gospel, and who would not give themselves the trouble even to look into any thing written by christians, were astonished at this novelty, and considered the christian converts as seized with madness. But so general an effect, upon the more sober and virtuous part of the community, in all countries, the best subjects of the empire in all other respect, was a circumstance deserving of more attention than they were disposed to give to it.

On the other hand, it is no great wonder that, attached as many were to their ancient religions and rites, in which they had been educated, and which had been practiced from time immemorial; (imagining, as they did, that the welfare of the state depended upon the observance of them) ignorant as they were of the nature and evidences of christianity, uninquisitive about it, and listening to every idle and malicious slander against those who made profession of the new religion, so many persons in the higher ranks of life, and even men of letters,



letters, and philosophers, as well as of the lowest rabble, who will listen to nothing rational or serious, still continued bigoted heathens.

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## SECTION V.

*From the Council of the Apostles to Paul's third apostolical Journey.*

**W**HILE Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch, Peter arrived at that city from Jerusalem; and finding many Gentile converts, he did not scruple to converse and communicate with them. But other christians, pretending to have the authority of James (who seems to have had the chief influence at Jerusalem) insisted on the new converts being circumcised, and becoming in all respects proselytes to Judaism; and Peter, rather than displease these persons, abstained from communicating with the Gentile converts, and associated with the Jews only. This conduct in Peter gave

gave just alarm and offence to Paul, who had been chiefly instrumental in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles, and who, on that account, was naturally more zealous for their liberty. He therefore freely and publicly expostulated with Peter on the impropriety and inconsistency of his conduct; and this excellent man did not persist in what he was convinced was wrong\*.

The more zealous Jewish christians, however, unmoved by the remonstrances of Paul, or the acquiescence of Peter, still maintained that there was no salvation out of the Mosaic institutions, and insisted upon the Gentile converts conforming in all respects to them; and the church being much disturbed by this contention, they agreed to send Barnabas and Paul, who had been their messengers on a former occasion, to consult the whole body of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. These two missionaries gave an account of all that God had done by their means in Gentile countries to the christian societies; in their journey through Phœnice and Samaria, and by them the news was heard with great joy. But when they came to Jerusalem, they were not able to give the same satisfaction to their brethren there†.

However, on a day appointed to consider of the

\* Gal. ii. 11.

† Acts xv. 3.

the matter, after much contention, Peter, stood up, and reminded them how God had some time before given his sanction to the admission of believing Gentiles into the christian church, by imparting to them the gifts of the spirit as he had done to themselves; and said that it was unreasonable to impose upon the Gentiles so heavy a yoke, as the observance of the laws of Moses must be to them, when it would make no difference with respect to their final salvation.

This was followed by Paul and Barnabas giving a distinct account of the effect of their preaching to the Gentiles, and of the miracles with which it had been attended. On this James recollected several passages of the ancient prophets, which he thought, implied that the Gentiles were to be admitted into the future kingdom of the Messiah, and gave it as his opinion, that the new converts should not be troubled with the observance of the whole law, but that it should be recommended to them to abstain from idols (meaning probably from partaking of the feasts in sacrificing to idols) from fornication (to which the religion of the heathens gave too much countenance, and of the criminality of which the heathens in general made very light) from things strangled, and from blood.

In this opinion the whole assembly acquiesced,  
and

and accordingly an epistle was drawn up, addressed to the Gentile Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, by whom Paul and Barnabas had been sent, to that purpose; assuring them that, notwithstanding what some had said, they had no authority from them to insist upon their being circumcised, or observing the laws of Moses. Along with this letter, and the bearers of it, Paul and Barnabas, they sent Judas and Silas, who were probably elders at Jerusalem, to give them a farther account; and when it was delivered at Antioch, it gave the greatest satisfaction to the whole assembly. Judas and Silas continued in that city some time, encouraging the brethren; and when Judas returned to Jerusalem, Silas chose to remain at Antioch\*.

This solemn assembly, or council, of the apostles was probably held A. D. 49, and the year following, Paul and Barnabas resolved upon a second progress through those parts of Asia Minor, which they had visited in their former journey. But when Barnabas proposed to take Mark with them, Paul objected to him on account of his having left them before; and not being able to agree, they took different routs, Barnabas being accompanied by Mark, and Paul by Silas; and as Barnabas chose

chose to go to Cyprus, Paul took the road through Syria and Cilicia; each of them beginning his progress through those countries with which he was best acquainted.\*

Of what Barnabas did in his progress, and to the end of his life, we are not informed; but Paul being attended in a great measure by Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, we are happily well acquainted with his subsequent history; and as he laboured more than any of the apostles in the propagation of the gospel, and was more successful in it, especially in Gentile countries, and above all in Greece, the seat of learning and the arts, it is by far of the most importance for us to be informed of the particulars of his progress: We cannot, indeed, be without our wishes to know more of the history, public and private, of the rest of the apostles, and others who distinguished themselves by their early attachment to christianity, but it is a curiosity which, for wise reasons, no doubt, it has not pleased divine providence to gratify. As to any *honour* which, from this circumstance, might have accrued to them, it is not probable that they had any desire or thought of the kind. It was esteemed enough by them to partake of that glory which will be revealed at the great day, when every man's virtues and

\* Acts xv. 41.

and exertions will be sufficiently known, and when merit will be better appreciated than it can be at present. Let this consideration lessen our desire for what is called immortality in this world, in having our names transmitted with applause to distant generations ; extending our views to that which will commence when this world, and what is usually called *time*, shall be no more.

But dropping these reflections, let us attend to the progress of Paul ; and now we shall find him not contenting himself with visiting the churches which he had planted before, but greatly extending his circuit, and planting many new churches, and far more considerable ones, in the more distant parts of Asia Minor, and also in Greece. Having passed through Syria and Cilicia, he came to Derbe and Lystra, which he had visited in his former journey ; and at the latter of these places he took Timothy to accompany him in his farther progress. This young man was one of the most distinguished of Paul's disciples, and though his father was a Greek, yet as his mother was a Jewess, he caused him to be circumcised ; which sufficiently shews that, notwithstanding Paul's zeal for the liberty of the Gentile christians, he believed in the obligation of the laws of Moses upon all who were of Jewish extraction\*.

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As in his former progress Paul had visited only the southern and interior parts of Asia Minor, he now directed his course through the northern and western parts; going through Galatia and Phrygia; but being admonished by the spirit not to preach at that time in Asia proper, or that province of which Ephesus was the capital, he went to Mysia; and wherever he came he recited the epistle of the church at Jerusalem, which gave such satisfaction to the Gentile converts, that the churches formerly established were confirmed, and their numbers were increased. From Mysia, Paul had intended to go to Bythia; but being directed by the spirit of God, he came to Troas, a city on the coast of the Ægean sea, over against Macedonia; and there he appears to have been joined by Luke the writer of the history, as from this time he uses the plural number *we*, &c. That christian churches were every where established in all the places through which Paul had passed, appears from the subsequent history, though no mention is made of them in this concise account.

Paul was now come to the western extremity of Asia Minor, and his purpose to cross the sea, and visit Greece, was suggested to him by a vision, in which a man of Macedonia appeared to him, and intreated him to go and help them. Accordingly, he and his company went first to the island  
 Vol. I. L Samothrace,

Samothrace; and then, landing on the continent at Neapolis, they proceeded to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. Having waited a few days, they went on the sabbath to a place by the river side, whither, for want perhaps of a proper synagogue, the Jews used to resort for prayer. At this place the women particularly attended, and a convert being made of a woman whose name was Lydia, a seller of purple (which being a valuable commodity at that time, implies some degree of opulence in those who vended it) she prevailed upon Paul and his companions to go into her house, and entertained them some days\*.

In this place Paul brought himself and his companions into difficulty by a most benevolent miracle. An insane woman, thought to be possessed by a spirit which enabled her to tell fortunes, and who by that means had been the source of great gains to some persons whose slave she was, frequently shouting after Paul and his friends, and calling them (what she had probably heard of themselves, or others) the servants of the most high God, who were come to shew them the way of salvation; Paul (feeling, no doubt, a divine impulse) pronounced her cured in the name of  
Jesus

\*Acts xvi. 15.



Jesus Christ; on which she was instantly restored to her right mind. The gains of this poor slave's masters vanishing with her disorder, they were so provoked, that, seizing Paul and Silas, and persuading the magistrates that, being Jews, they were introducing foreign customs, forbidden by the Roman laws, they procured an order to have them severely scourged, and put in prison.

So far was this unjust and cruel treatment from being felt as an affliction by Paul and his companion, that though they were not only confined by walls, but were farther secured by having their feet put in the stocks, they spent the night in singing praises to God. It pleased the divine being, however, to effect their deliverance in a miraculous manner, and by that means to procure great respect to the christian cause in this city, the first in which the gospel had been preached on the continent of Greece. For at midnight there was a great earthquake, attended with the opening of the doors of the prison, and what was infinitely more extraordinary, the loosing of the bonds by which the prisoners were confined:

The keeper of the prison, awaked by the earthquake, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was going to kill himself, rather than suffer an ignominious death for the neglect of his duty, with which, he, no doubt, apprehended that  
he

he should be charged; but Paul, perceiving his intention, called out to him aloud, telling him they were all safe. Thus encouraged, he got a light and ran into the place; and being much terrified, though pleased to find that what Paul had said was true, he fell at their feet, and having probably heard them preach, and been somewhat impressed with their discourse, and being now convinced of the presence of God with them, he eagerly asked *what he should do to be saved*. Whether by *salvation* he meant the happiness of a future state or not, Paul understanding him in that sense, replied that, if he believed in Jesus Christ he would be saved. Being afterwards more at leisure in the house into which the jailer had taken his prisoners, they discoursed to him more at large concerning the christian religion; and he and his family being convinced of its truth, they were all baptized, and spent the remainder of the night in great joy.

When it was day, the magistrates, reflecting upon the violence and irregularity of their proceedings, sent orders to release their prisoners; but Paul, taking advantage of his privilege of a Roman citizen, which he inherited from his father, replied that, as they had acted contrary to the Roman law in scourging a citizen of Rome, he would not leave the place till they waited upon him themselves.

selves. At this the magistrates were not a little alarmed, and having come, and made their acknowledgments, they prevailed upon them, after much entreaty, to go away. Accordingly, after paying another visit to Lydia, and encouraging the disciples they had made, they left Philippi, and passing through Amphipolis, and Apollonia; they came to Thessalonica, where there were Jews\*. The reason of their making no stay at either of the two other places probably was there being few or no Jews in them; and at this time Paul always chose to address himself in the first place to the Jews. And it was a great convenience to the preachers of the gospel to find regular places of worship, to which a number of persons always resorted, and where they themselves could conscientiously attend. Also, besides Jews, curiosity generally brought some of the Gentiles to their synagogues.

At Thessalonica our missionaries were far from deriving any advantage from their countrymen. For after they had preached some time, and made some disciples, the unbelieving Jews insulted them in the grossest manner, assaulting the house of one Jason their friend, and endeavouring to excite the common people against them. Not finding them at the house of Jason, they took him and some of the

\*Acts xvii. 1,

the disciples to the magistrates, accusing them of rebellion against the emperor, in consequence of setting up another king called Jesus. At this the rulers and the people were much disturbed; but not entering into all the violence of the prosecutors, they contented themselves with taking security of Jason and the other disciples of the place, and then dismissed Paul and his companions. Apprehensive however of the malice of their enemies, they left the place by night, and came to Berea, where they found the Jews better disposed than in most other places; for they gave Paul a patient hearing, and, as he appealed to the scriptures, they examined by them the truth of what he advanced; and here they made many converts, both of Jews and Greeks; and among them were several women of condition.

But the Jews who had persecuted them at Thessalonica, hearing that they were received at Berea, incited the common people to insult them there also. In consequence of this, the disciples, after making preparation for sending away Paul by sea, conducted him by land to Athens, while Silas and Timothy continued at Berea, intending to follow him as soon as possible\*.

At Athens we find Paul in a situation considerably

\*Acts xvii. 14.

## SEC. V. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 37

erably different from any that he had been in before, and they who have formed a high opinion of the learning which was cultivated in that city, cannot but have their curiosity excited to know how he would conduct himself there. Far from being intimidated by the fame of the learning of the Athenians; Paul not only disputed with the Jews in their synagogues, as in other cities, but in places of public concourse with any person that came in his way.

After behaving in this manner for some time some philosophers of the Epicurean and Stoic sects (of whom the former made pleasure the great end of life, while the latter affected to act upon maxims of the most rigid morality) endeavoured to expose him to ridicule; calling him an idle prater. But that not silencing him, or answering their purpose, they brought against him a serious accusation of introducing new gods, because he preached about Jesus and the resurrection. In answer to this charge he was obliged to make his defence before the Areopagus, the most respectable court of judicature in that city, or in all Greece, and which had cognizance of all matters of religion. The judges of this court sat on benches of stone in the open air, and before them Paul was interrogated concerning the new doctrine which he was charged with preaching :

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As it was a crime to introduce the worship of any new deity, without the authority of the state, Paul, with great address, took advantage of an inscription which he had seen on one of their altars, which was dedicated TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, to compliment the Athenians on the attention which they gave to the subject of religion; and said that the God which he had preached to them, was he to whom they had paid worship, though without having sufficient knowledge of him, viz. the God who made the world and all things in it. This God, he said, unlike the other objects of their worship, did not dwell in temples made by men, or stand in need of any services which they could render him, since he was to all, the giver of life, and of every enjoyment. He added, that what one of their own poets had said of Jupiter, viz. that mankind are his offspring, was eminently true of this God; and hence he argued that, if men are the offspring of God, and resemble him, he could not be represented by such lifeless statues of gold, silver, or stone, as those to which they paid their devotions. He then informed them that, though God had thought fit to permit this improper worship for a time, he now called upon all mankind to abandon it, and adopt a more rational service of him. He farther assured them that God had fixed a day on which he would judge all men according

ing to their works, by Jesus Christ, whom he had appointed for that purpose, and that his divine mission was confirmed by his resurrection from the dead.

In this part of his discourse Paul was interrupted by some who laughed at the idea of a resurrection; but, as far as appears, without inquiring into the evidence that Paul could have adduced for it. Others, however, expressed a wish to hear him farther on this interesting subject, and he was probably dismissed without punishment, or censure. At Athens Paul made some, though not many converts. Among them, however, was Dionysius a member of the court before which he had pleaded, and a woman whose name was Damaris\*.

It is to the honour of Athens, that Paul met with no ill usage there; but that when he thought proper, after being joined by Timothy, he left that city, and came to Corinth, where he met with a Jew of the name of Aquila, and his wife Priscilla, who had left Rome in consequence of Claudius having banished all Jews from the metropolis of the empire†. This man was a tent-maker, and

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Paul

\*Acts xvii. 34.

† Suetonius, who mentions this banishment of the Jews from Rome, says it was on account of their continually

Paul having been taught the same art, worked with him, and maintained himself by his labour. Here, as in other places, Paul attended in the synagogue every sabbath day, and there laboured to convince both Jews and Greeks of the truth of the christian religion, and that Jesus was the promised Messiah; and Silas and Timothy having joined him from Macedonia, he exerted himself still more, being animated by their society.

At

nually making tumults at the instigation of Chrestus Vit. Claudii. C. 25. By this he probably meant Jesus, and Dr. Benson supposes that the tumults he speaks of were such as were occasioned by their violent opposition to christianity at its introduction into Rome, similar to those which they excited in other places on the same account. It is indeed probable that christianity had been preached in Rome at this time, and that the zealous Jews opposed the introduction of it is equally probable; but as such tumults as these could hardly be so great as to give occasion to such a measure as the banishment of all Jews, christians and others, I should rather think that Suetonius, in whose time the christians made a considerable figure; and to whom Nero had ascribed the burning of Rome, imagined, without any reason for it, that this edict of Claudius had a similar cause. Josephus takes no notice of this edict, and it is evident from the subsequent history that it was not of long continuance, whether it expired with the death of Claudius or not.



At length the unbelieving Jews were so much offended at Paul, and opposed him with so much violence that, perceiving they would hear no reason, he solemnly shook his garment in their place of public worship, saying, "Your blood be upon your own heads. I am innocent of your ruin. I shall now preach to the Gentiles." Accordingly, quitting the synagogue, he from this time made use of the house of one Justus, a pious man, who lived near the place. He had not, however, preached in vain before; for Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, was converted, and many others with him. Farther to encourage Paul, Jesus appeared to him, and bade him continue to preach with all boldness, for that no person should hurt him, and that *he had much people in that city*. In consequence of this he continued there a year and six months.

In the mean time, the unbelieving Jews, disturbed, no doubt, at the many converts which Paul made, brought him before Gallio the Roman governor of the province, accusing him of teaching men to worship God in a manner contrary to the laws of Moses. But when Gallio found that the charge related only to their religion, he declared that he would not interfere in any business of that kind, and dismissed them unheard\*.

During

\*Acts xviii. 17.

During Paul's residence at Corinth, he wrote two epistles to the christians at Thessalonica, from which place he had been driven by a persecution which had probably extended to his disciples : for Timothy having joined Paul at Athens, had by him been sent back to Thessalonica, to comfort them under their sufferings from the unbelieving Jews, and to confirm them in the faith of the gospel\*. In the first of the epistles which he now wrote to them, besides having the same object with his message by Timothy, he gave them a more particular account of the christian doctrine of the resurrection, which some of them seem to have misapprehended. And happy it is for us that this apostle had such an occasion to explain himself so fully on this important subject, as well as in his epistle to the Corinthians afterwards ; since by this means we are acquainted with some particulars concerning it, of which we must otherwise have been ignorant.

The first epistle to the Thessalonians, written A. D. 52, is the oldest writing now extant of any christian, and being unquestionably authentic, and written not long after, and even during, the time of the transactions to which it alludes, it supplies the most indisputable evidence of several of those facts which are inseparably connected with, and necessarily

\*Thess. iii. 2.

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necessarily imply, the truth of every thing that is essential in the christian history.

The second epistle to the Theſſalonians was written not many months after the firſt, which appears to have been very favourably received ; but Paul wrote this ſecond in order to give the chriſtians of that place ſome farther admonitions, and alſo ſome information with reſpect to the miſtakes which they were ſtill under, eſpecially as to the near approach of the day of judgment. Both theſe epiſtles abound with excellent moral precepts, expreſſed with great energy, which clearly ſhews that the great object of the preachers of the goſpel had nothing of ambition or ſelfiſhneſs in it ; but that it was intended to reform the world, and to prepare men by good diſpoſitions and good conduct in this life, for the proper employment and happineſs of another.

From Corinth alſo it is probable that Paul wrote the epiſtle to the churches of Galatia which had been troubled by ſome Jewish converts who had conceived, and endeavoured to propagate, prejudices againſt his authority, and, who had inculcated the neceſſity of the Gentile converts conforming to circumciſion, and all the inſtitutions of Moſes. On this account Paul, in this epiſtle, enlarges on the evidence of his apoſtolic authority, as what he had received from Jeſus himſelf, and  
not

not from the other apostles. This he shews by a succinct account of his history : and he endeavours by a variety of arguments to keep those to whom he writes, firm in the profession and practice of the pure gospel of Jesus, unadulterated with any mixture from the institutions of Moses, as they were not obligatory upon the Gentile converts. He concludes this, as well as his other epistles, with practical admonitions and exhortations.

If the epistle of Titus was written, as Dr. Lardner supposes, from Macedonia, in Paul's third journey, it is probable that he visited Crete from Corinth at this time ; as he does not appear ever to have been nearer to Crete than he was now, and to Titus he had committed the care of the churches in that island.

Paul continued at Corinth some time after this, and then thinking to return to Syria, he took Aquila and Priscilla with him ; and having shaved his head at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth (for he had made some vow, and scrupulously conformed to the Jewish ritual with respect to it) he took ship there, and sailed to Ephesus, where he left his two companions. As for himself, he, according to his custom, attended the synagogue worship in the place, and preached to the Jews who resorted to it. But though he was pressed to  
continue

continue some time at Ephesus, he declined it, alleging that he must of necessity be at Jerusalem at the next festival; and promising to return if it pleased God, he left his friends there, and went to sea by Cæsarea. Having gone thence to Jerusalem, to shew his respect to the church there, he returned to Antioch from which he had set out\*.

This was a most important journey, as by means of it the knowledge of the gospel was much extended, christian churches being now planted in the most considerable cities of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece; and from these cities christianity would soon spread itself to the neighbouring towns of less note, and from them to the villages. This brings the history of christianity to A. D. 53.

Acts xviii. 22

## SECTION

## SECTION VI.

*From Paul's third Journey to his Confinement at Jerusalem.*

PAUL having continued some time at Antioch, but probably not a whole year, set out upon his third apostolical journey, to preach the gospel in Asia and Greece; and having made a regular progress through Galatia, and Phrygia, he came to Ephesus, where he had left Aquila and Priscilla, and where, in his absence, had been Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, very eloquent and well versed in the scriptures, but only acquainted with the preaching and baptism of John till by Aquila and Priscilla he was informed of the doctrine of Christ. Being disposed to pass into Achaia the disciples recommended them to their brethren there, and he was of great use in that country, in strengthening the believers, and making converts among the Jews; convincing them from the scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. Apollos was at Corinth when Paul arrived at Ephesus.

Here Paul meeting with a company of twelve men, besides women, who, like Apollos, had been baptized

baptized by John, but were unacquainted with the doctrine of Jesus, he instructed them in it, and baptized them in the name of Jesus. After this Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them, so that they spake with tongues, and prophesied\*.

At Ephesus, Paul, as he had done at other places, began with resorting to the Jewish synagogue, and preaching there, which he now did for about three months ; but this being attended with much wrangling, he quitted that place, and taught in the school of one Tyrannus, probably a heathen philosopher, and perhaps converted by him. Here Paul continued two years ; and preaching in the neighbouring cities as well as at Ephesus, all the country of Asia properly so called had an opportunity of being well acquainted with the principles of the christian religion. It pleased the divine Being also on this occasion, to add the sanction of miracles in a very distinguishing manner to the preaching of Paul ; so that even when the handkerchiefs and aprons of sick persons were brought to him, their diseases were cured, and some of the persons relieved by him where demonia-

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Acts xix. 6.

Some Jewish exorcists, seven sons of one Sceva a Jew, and chief of the priests, perceiving this, and thinking there must be some powerful charm in the invocation of the name of Jesus, repeated it over a demoniac, saying, "We adjure thee by Jesus whom Paul preaches." But the madman, not being restored to his right mind, though distinguishing what they said, insulted them, and fell violently upon them, saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye," and they did not escape without wounds. This event made much noise in the town and country, and the success of Paul and of these exorcists being so manifestly different, it brought a great accession of reputation to Paul, and was the means of gaining him many converts. At the same time the inefficacy and folly of all magical rites was so apparent, that great numbers brought their books containing such secrets, and burned them publicly; and though they might have been sold for fifty thousand pieces of silver (equal probably to eight hundred pounds) they chose to make this sacrifice, rather than contribute to the spread of such wicked and mischievous arts by the sale of them\*.

At Ephesus Paul was applied to by messengers from Corinth, where, as well as in Galatia, attempts

\*Acts xix. 19.



attempts had been made to lessen his authority; and where some persons distinguished by their eloquence, and boasting of their knowledge, had taught that the christian resurrection was not a literal rising from the dead, but something else; either a change of life and conduct, or the emancipation of the soul from its confinement in the body. These persons, therefore, evidently held the Gnostic opinions, and this is the first time we meet with the mention of them among christians. For the philosophers of that age, believing in the inherent evil nature of matter, and that the soul was only confined in the body for a time, thought it would be most consummately happy when it was discharged from its fleshly incumbrance,

On this account Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, asserts at large the reality of a proper resurrection, in imitation of that of Jesus, on which the whole of the christian scheme depended; assuring them that that which was committed to the grave would rise again, but changed in its nature and properties, from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible, from earthly to heavenly. He also answered a variety of questions which they had proposed to him relating to the Lord's supper, spiritual gifts, marriage (which their Gnostic teachers had considered as a defilement) abstaining from feasts in honour of idols, which some of  
them

them thought to be very innocent, and from fornication, which the religion of the heathens countenanced on those occasions, and to which the inhabitants of the luxurious city of Corinth were remarkably addicted.

Paul's address to them on these and other subjects, shews that many of these first converts, though they were convinced of the truth of christianity, were not immediately reformed by it, but continued addicted to the sensual gratifications in which they had indulged themselves before, and that it was not without difficulty that they were brought off from them. And we may easily believe that many persons of good sense, and competent judges of evidence, but whose lives and moral characters were far from being irreproachable might be convinced of the truth of christianity, but that it would be some time before it effected a reformation of their conduct.

In this epistle Paul also asserts his own apostolical authority, and endeavours to make the Corinthian converts think less highly of the boasted eloquence of their new teachers, who seem, like the philosophers and rhetoricians of those times to have received money for their harangues. He therefore shews the difference between his own conduct and theirs in that respect.

From Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy and Eras-

tus

tus before him into Macedonia, as he intended to go that way into Achaia which he had done before. His farther view was to return to Jerusalem, and in another journey to go as far as Rome. But while he continued at Ephesus, in the absence of Timothy and Erastus, there was a great tumult in the city, occasioned by one Demetrius, and others who made what are called *silver shrines* for Diana, a goddess who was worshiped in a magnificent temple, and with great pomp, at Ephesus. These people, seeing the great progress that Paul and his companions made in converting the people to christianity, and consequently bringing them off from the worship of Diana, clearly foresaw, if they did not already feel, a great diminution of their profits.

In this tumult two of Paul's friends, Gaius and Aristarchus, who were of Macedonia, were seized, and carried into the public theatre; and on this Alexander, a Jew (being probably a good speaker, and a man of some influence in the place) was brought by his brethren into the theatre, to endeavour to appease the multitude; but the authors of the tumult prevented him by incessantly shouting, as they had done some time before, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. However, the chief magistrate in the place insisting upon being heard, reproved the people for the disturbance that had been

been made, which he said was altogether unjustifiable, as they had no crime to lay to the charge of Paul or his friends; adding, that if they had any just accusation against them they should be heard in a regular assembly. By this means an end was put to the tumult, and presently after Paul left Ephesus, and went, as he had proposed, to Macedonia, leaving Timothy, who had arrived before he set out\*.

From Macedonia, Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy, to whom he had intrusted the care of the church of Ephesus; and from this epistle it appears that this church was then infected with the Gnostic doctrines, by persons pretending to science and philosophy, who despised the plain preaching of Paul. He therefore urges Timothy strenuously to oppose the progress of those opinions, and he gives him many excellent advices relating to the conduct of himself, and of the church which was committed to his care.

It is also supposed that Paul wrote at this time his epistle to Titus; and as it is very similar to the epistle to Timothy, it is evident that the churches in Crete must have been in the same state with that at Ephesus, gnosticism having been introduced there, as well as into other churches. For that

that being the philosophy of the times, the converts who had made profession of it, would naturally be inclined to mix their peculiar tenets with the christian doctrines. When Paul wrote to Titus, he proposed to pass the winter in Nicopolis, and urged him to come to him thither\*.

From Macedonia it is probable that Paul, at this time, passed into Illyricum, and that before he left this country, or Macedonia, he wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians. He had been very anxious about the reception of his former epistle, which had been sent by Titus, who was to have met him at Troas, after he had left Ephesus, but who did not join him till he arrived in Macedonia. Here Titus gave Paul such an account of the situation of things at Corinth, and of the effect of his former epistle, as gave him great encouragement, though he saw sufficient reason to write a second epistle before he went to that city in person. This also was sent by Titus, who returned to Corinth, in order to promote a collection for the poor christians at Jerusalem. In this second epistle Paul explains himself farther with respect to some subjects of which he had treated in the former. He also enforces his admonitions  
against

\*I am by no means satisfied about the time in which Paul wrote his epistle to Titus.

against the Gnostic teachers, by whom that church had been misled.

Paul, having preached with much assiduity, at length departed from these northern regions, and arrived in Greece properly so called, A. D. 58; his chief object being Corinth. Here he stayed three months, and finding himself at leisure, wrote a large epistle to the christians at Rome. It does not appear who had preached christianity in this city; but as there was a perpetual concourse of people of all descriptions, from all parts of the empire to the metropolis, nothing could be transacted in the most distant province that would not soon be known there; and christians as well as others, having business in Rome, their zeal would naturally prompt them to communicate to others what they were acquainted with, and valued, themselves: Also, many persons, being converted to christianity at Rome, would make more converts on their return to those provinces to which they belonged. Thus the vast extent of the Roman empire, which comprehended almost all the civilized part of the world, was a circumstance exceedingly favourable to the speedy propagation of the gospel. It is also a circumstance peculiarly favourable to the evidence of christianity, that it took the deepest root in the most civilized and learned, and

and consequently the most inquisitive, part of the world.

It appears from this epistle that they were Jews who were most active in preaching the gospel at Rome, and that there, as well as in other places, they had inculcated their peculiar prejudices in conjunction with it. For they had endeavoured to impose the yoke of the Mosaic institutions upon the Gentile christians there; and it was chiefly with a view to correct this error, that Paul, who justly considered himself as the apostle of the Gentiles, and consequently the asserter of their rights, wrote this epistle. For this is the great object of it. At the same time, however, he endeavours to give those to whom he writes a very high, but a strictly just idea of the value of christianity, as opposed to the heathenish rites in which they had been educated, and in which the most unnatural vices had been practised. In opposition to every thing of this kind, he strongly inculcates the excellent moral precepts of christianity.

At Corinth, as well in other places, the unbelieving Jews did Paul every ill office in their power. At this time, they even laid wait for him, probably intending to murder him; but he escaped from them by going first to Macedonia; whereas they had imagined he would go directly to Syria, and had, no doubt, laid their plan accordingly.

ingly. In Macedonia, Paul was joined by Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy. There were also with him from Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. All these persons going before, waited for him (who was accompanied by Luke) at Troas, where he arrived, after spending the passage, at Philippi\*.

At Troas Paul and his company spent seven days, of which the last was the Lord's day; and as he was to depart on the morrow, he was led to prolong his discourse to the assembled church till midnight; in consequence of which, a young man, of the name of Eutychus, who had seated himself in a higher part of the building, being overcome with sleep, fell down; and was taken up for dead; but Paul, praying over him, he was presently restored to life. After this interruption, Paul continued with the disciples till day break; and having received the communion with them, he departed.

From Troas Paul went by land to Assos, where his friends, who had gone thither by sea, took him in, and proceeded to Mytelene. When they were come to Miletus, Paul, who was determined not to make any stay in Asia, lest he should be prevented from arriving at Jerusalem at

\*Acts x. 6.



the time that he had fixed, sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus, and addressed them in a most affectionate and excellent speech; in which he recited the particulars of his own conduct among them, and exhorted them to imitate him in their care of the church. After concluding with prayer, they parted from each other with many tears, especially as Paul had told them, that they must not expect to see him any more\*.

Paul and his company then proceeded on their voyage, and at length arrived at Tyre, whither the ship they were in was bound. There they found christians with whom they stayed seven days; and here some who had the spirit of prophecy warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But without attending to the admonition, he took leave of them as he had done of the elders of Ephesus; and with every mark of affection, and with a great crowd of women and children, they accompanied him to the ship. They next proceeded to Ptolemais, where they stayed one day, and the day after they arrived at Cæsarea, where they were received by Philip the evangelist, the same who had converted the eunuch of Ethiopia, and who had four daughters who were prophetesses.

Here Paul and his friends continued some time; having it now in their power, without the uncertainty

\* Acts xx. 38.

uncertainty attending a passage by sea, to proceed to Jerusalem whenever they pleased ; and while they continued here there came from Jerusalem the same Agabus, who had foretold the famine in the time of Claudius. He, in imitation of the ancient prophets, who often expressed themselves by symbols, caused himself to be bound hand and foot with Paul's girdle, and said that, in the same manner, would the Jews of Jerusalem bind the owner of that girdle, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. On this all the company earnestly entreated Paul that he would not proceed to Jerusalem; but he, with a noble magnanimity, replied that he was ready not only to be bound, but also to suffer death, at Jerusalem in the cause of Christ: After this they used no further intreaties, but with the same resignation, said *The will of God be done*. Then being joined by Mnason, an old disciple of Cyprus, and other christians of Cæsarea, they went together to Jerusalem ; where their fellow christians received them with joy.\* This was at pentecost, A. D. 58, eight years before the commencement of the famous Jewish war.

\* Acts xxi. 17.

SECTION VII.

*From Paul's confinement at Jerusalem to his arrival at Rome, A. D. 61, and his employment there.*

THE day after Paul's arrival at Jerusalem he went to James, and the elders of the church; and when he had given them an account of his success in extending the knowledge of the gospel, they rejoiced at it; but informed him, that there were many thousands of the Jewish christians at Jerusalem, exceedingly zealous for the observance of the law, who had heard that he had taught even the Jews in Gentile countries to abandon the institutions of Moses, and discontinue the circumcising of their children. In order to refute this calumny, they advised him to shew his conformity to the law by the public observance of some of its rites. Accordingly he accompanied, four men who had a vow on them, and purified himself along with them, by sacrifices and other ceremonies. This would have taken up seven days, but before they were expired, some Jews from Asia, seeing him

him in the temple, caused him to be apprehended in a tumultuous manner, alleging that wherever he had been he had taught things contrary to the people of the Jews, the law, and the temple, and likewise that he had brought Greeks into the temple, and had thereby polluted that holy place.\* For they had seen him in the city accompanied by Trophimus an Ephesian, and took it for granted that he had taken him into the temple.

In this tumult, in which a great part of the city was involved, Paul would have been destroyed, if Lyfias, the Roman governor of the city, had not rescued him. He thought it necessary, however, to secure him by binding him, and ordering him to be lodged in a castle adjoining the temple. But the tumult still continuing as they were carrying him away, Paul asked leave to speak to the people. On this the governor, probably hearing him speak in Greek, expressed some surprize at it, having supposed that he might have been an Egyptian, who sometime before had made a rebellion in the country; but Paul told him that he was a Jew, and a citizen of Tarsus.

Having leave to speak, Paul addressed the multitude in Hebrew, and in a speech of considerable length, gave them an account of his history and conversion to christianity. But when he came

to

\* Acts xxi. 28.

## SEC. VII. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 111

to speak of his being sent to the Gentiles, his audience were not able to restrain themselves any longer, but exclaimed against him as a person not fit to live.\* On this the governor commanded him to be brought into the castle, and was proceeding to examine him by torture, and had him bound for that purpose, when Paul informed them that, being a Roman citizen, they could not legally scourge him. This intimidated the governor, who therefore contented himself with bringing Paul, unbound, the next day before the Jewish sanhedrim.

Twenty-three years had now elapsed since Paul had been in the confidence of the chief rulers of his country, and employed by them in the persecution of the christians, so that at this time many of them must have been unknown to him, and among these perhaps was the high-priest Ananias. For when upon his declaring his innocence, this supreme magistrate irregularly and unjustly ordered a person to strike him; being provoked, but not intimidated, he replied "God shall smite thee thou whited wall, for sitting to judge me according to the law, and commanding me to be smitten contrary to the law;" and being reproved for it, as reviling God's high priest, he said, that he did not know that he was the high-priest.

This

\*Acts xxii. 22.

This intrepid behaviour of Paul might perhaps dispose his judges to respect him more than they had done. The court, however, appears to have been more composed after this irregular proceeding; and Paul, having the presence of mind to view his judges with attention, and, recollecting many of them, perceived that some of them were Sadducees and others Pharisees; and hoping to divide them, and to avail himself of their difference of opinion, he cried out that he was a Pharisee, and the son of Pharisee; and that it was for holding the doctrine of the Pharisees, viz. the resurrection of the dead, that he was brought before them. This produced the effect that he wished. For the Pharisees took his part, saying, it was possible that an angel, or a spirit (the existence of which the Sadducees denied) might have spoken to him; and, perhaps recollecting the advice of Gamaliel on a similar occasion, they said they ought not to fight against God. The governor seeing this division, and the tumult which it produced; and fearing lest his prisoner should be torn in pieces among them, sent soldiers, and took him by force into the castle. The night following this, Jesus appeared to Paul, and encouraged him; telling him that as he had borne his testimony to him in Jerusalem, he should do the same in Rome.\*

The

\*Acts xxiii. 11.

## SEC. VII. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 113

The next day the unbelieving Jews being exceedingly exasperated against Paul, more than forty of them bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink till they had killed him. This, however, came to the knowledge of a son of Paul's sister, and he, by application to the governor prevented the execution of their design. For Lyfias immediately sent him under a strong guard to Cæsarea, the residence of the Roman prefect Felix, with a letter, informing him of the reasons why he had sent him; and that he did not perceive that he was charged with any offence of a civil nature, but that he had acquainted his accusers that they might carry their complains to his tribunal. Accordingly Felix ordered him to be confined, till his accusers should appear against him.\*

Five days after this, Ananias the high-priest himself, with other leading men of the Jews, came to Cæsarea, and employed an orator of the name of Tertullus to open the charge against Paul. It consisted of three articles, viz. that he was a mover of sedition through all the world, that he had profaned the temple, and that he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. To this Paul replied, that with respect to the two first articles, they could not prove what they had alleged; that he had raised no tumult, that they had not even found

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him

\* Acts xxiii. 35.

him disputing with any person, and that in the temple he was performing the usual rites of purification together with other Jews from Asia; but he acknowledged that according to the sect which his enemies called *heresy*, he did worship the God of his fathers, believing especially the resurrection of the dead, in the faith of which he endeavoured to act with good conscience towards God and man. Felix, perceiving the malice of Paul's prosecutors, and the insufficiency of their proofs with respect to the article of sedition, which was all that he was concerned to inquire into, dismissed them till the arrival of Lyfias, when he said he should have an opportunity of forming a better judgment in the case. In the mean time he committed Paul to the custody of a centurion, but with orders that all his friends should have free access to him.\*

After some time Felix, accompanied by his wife Drusilla (who was sister to king Agrippa, and a woman of loose character) indulged his curiosity in inquiring of Paul concerning the christian religion. But in explaining the principles of it Paul spake with so much force concerning the duties of temperance and justice, which had been shamefully violated by his hearers, and also concerning a future judgment, that Felix was sensibly moved by his

\*Acts xxiv. 23.



## SIC. VII. CHRISTIAN CHURCH 115

his discourse, and dismissing him for the present, said that he would send for him again when he should have more leisure to hear him

Felix, being an avaricious man, was not without hope that Paul's friends, who he might perceive were very considerable, would have advanced money for his release ; and with this view he often sent for him ; but being disappointed in this expectation, and fearing the resentment of the Jews, to whom he had made himself very obnoxious, when he was succeeded in his government by Festus, he left Paul a prisoner.\* Felix was a man of low extraction, who had been advanced by the interest of his brother Pallas, a freed man and favourite of the emperor Claudius ; and when he was accused by the Jews before Nero, who was now emperor, he was condemned, but escaped punishment by the interest of Agrippina Nero's mother.

Festus on his arrival in Judea, went directly to Jerusalem where he found the high priest and the leading men still violent against Paul, but he referred them to a public hearing at Cæsarea. Accordingly they went thither once more, and were as before, loud in their accusation of Paul, but incapable of proving any thing on which a sentence could be passed upon him. The governor, however

\* Acts xxiv. 27.

ever, willing to oblige the leading Jews on his arrival in his province, proposed to remove the prisoner to Jerusalem, and try him there. But Paul, tired with these delays, availed himself of his privilege of a Roman citizen, and appealed to the judgment of the emperor; and to this Festus consented\*.

Soon after this Festus was visited by king Agrippa the younger, who had succeeded his father, and by his sister Berenice†. To these guests the governor related the case of his prisoner; which so much excited the curiosity of Agrippa, that he expressed a wish to hear Paul himself. To this Festus consented the more willingly, as, being obliged to send him to Rome, and of course to give some account of him, he hoped that by means of this audience he should be able to draw up a more satisfactory account than at present he knew how to do.

Paul, being produced for this purpose, expressed much satisfaction in having an opportunity of explaining his principles before a Jewish prince, who

\* Acts xxv. 12.

† This Berenice had been married to her uncle Herod of Chalcis, and was at that time suspected of having a criminal connection with her brother. She was afterwards the great favourite of the emperor Titus, being a woman of exquisite beauty.

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who was acquainted with those prophecies to which he should have occasion to appeal. Then proceeding to give an account of himself, and especially of his miraculous conversion to christianity, Festus (who being a heathen, was not disposed to give much attention to accounts of miracles, and who probably entertained that contempt for the religion of the Jews which was common among persons of rank, who had made no inquiry concerning it) said that he was certainly out of his senses, and that much study had disordered his mind ; so that what he had related might all have passed in his imagination only. But Agrippa, who was a believer in miracles, could not so readily deny this, and, no doubt, considering the circumstances of it, acknowledged that he was almost persuaded to be a christian. To this Paul with great presence of mind, and much politeness, replied, “ I “ would to God that not only thou, but also all “ that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds.” With this the conference closed ; and it was agreed by them all, that he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to the emperor.\*

Paul, according to his sentence, was sent to Rome, under the custody of a centurion named Julius,

\*Acts xxvi. 32.

lius, who behaved to him with great civility ; giving him leave, when they came to Sidon, to land and see his friends. When they had proceeded as far as Crete, it was revealed to Paul, that if they went any further, at that late season of the year, it would be with great risque, not only of the ship, and of the lading, but also of their lives. However the centurion chose to listen to the master, and owner of the ship, and put to sea. But they were soon overtaken by a tempest, during which Paul told the crew, that the ship would be lost, but all their lives saved ; and accordingly they with difficulty got to shore on the island of Malta, the ship being stranded and dashed to pieces\*.

On this island the shipwrecked crew were received with hospitality ; and here it pleased God to distinguish Paul by some remarkable miracles. As he had got a bundle of sticks, and was laying them on the fire, a viper, which had not been perceived among them, feeling the heat, fastened on his hand ; which led the natives to imagine that he was a murderer, who though he had not perished in the shipwreck, was now overtaken by divine vengeance. But when he shook it off without receiving any harm, they concluded that he must be a god. What farther impression was made on their minds

\* Acts xxvii. 44,

## SEC. VII. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 119

minds by this extraordinary circumstance does not appear; but it is probable that it drew much attention upon him. For the father of Publius, the governor of the island, being ill of a fever and a bloody-flux, Paul (having probably been sent for on the occasion) prayed over him, and cured him; and upon this other sick persons were brought to him and were cured.

Having wintered in Malta, Paul and his company proceeded early in the spring (A. D. 61) towards Rome, calling at Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, at which last place Paul found some christian brethren; and at Appii forum and the Three Taverns, he was met by some christians from Rome, and was by them accompanied thither. Being now arrived at the place of his destination, he was delivered by the centurion to the custody of a soldier, who was chained to him; but in other respects he was at his liberty, and thus he continued two whole years, in a house which he hired, and had no restraint put upon him with respect to seeing or receiving any body; a liberty which we cannot doubt he made use of in favour of the gospel.

When Paul had been in Rome three days, he sent for the chief men among the Jews, and gave them an account of himself, and of the cause of his  
being

being sent thither. On this a day was fixed for a public hearing of him ; and the consequence of it was, that some of them, as in other places, became converts to christianity, while the rest were obstinate in their unbelief ; so that Paul informed them that, seeing no prospect of making any impression upon them, he should apply himself to the Gentiles.

We have no account of Paul's trial before the emperor ; but it may be collected from the epistles which he wrote from Rome, that though his friends deserted him upon that occasion, he was enabled to deliver himself with great boldness ; and that many persons, either from what he said on that occasion, or at other times, became converts to christianity, and among them were some of the emperor's family. He was probably reserved for a farther hearing, and after two years he had his liberty given him.

At Rome, Paul, having leisure to write, as well as to preach, wrote several valuable epistles, as that to the Ephesians, a second to Timothy, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon. He also wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, a little before, or soon after, his release. Considering the number of epistles which he wrote from Rome, it is rather remarkable that he did not write so much

as one during his equally long confinement in Judea, as it does not appear that he was not at liberty to write.

The object of the epistle to the Ephesians is to establish the christians of Ephesus, to whom he had preached a long time, in the pure faith of the gospel, and to counteract the endeavours of the Jewish teachers to bring them into bondage to the law of Moses. But though it is probable, from the first epistle to Timothy, that these Jewish teachers were Gnostics, there is no direct reference to any peculiar Gnostic opinions in this epistle. What he chiefly labours is to impress the minds of those to whom he wrote with a just sense of the value of the gospel, of the goodness of God in calling the gentiles to the privileges of it, and the importance of moral and relative duties.

There is a peculiar dignity and sublimity in this epistle, as well as evident marks of the strong affection that Paul bore to all his christian converts; and the same has been observed with respect to all the epistles which he wrote from Rome. He probably knew that he was near the close of his life, and therefore he wrote with that energy with which a man naturally gives his last admonitions to those he loves.

It is most probable that the second epistle to Timothy was written not long after Paul's arrival

at Rome, and in the spring or beginning of summer, as he presses him to come to him before winter; and in the other epistles from Rome, Timothy appears to have been with Paul; his name being joined with his own in his salutations from that place. The design of this epistle, besides urging Timothy to come to him, was to encourage him to persevere in preaching the gospel, notwithstanding the opposition he might meet with, the corruptions that would be introduced into it, and the degeneracy of many who bore the christian name. In this epistle there are evident allusions to the Gnostic doctrines, as there also were in the first epistle to Timothy. It is probable, therefore, that the Gnostics were numerous at Ephesus, as well as at Corinth; though Paul might not chuse to mention them in the epistle to the Ephesians themselves.

The christians at Philippi were probably wealthy, and they were proportionably generous, as they contributed largely to the apostle's support, when other churches were inattentive to his circumstances. They had not been unmindful of his situation now that he was a prisoner at Rome, but had sent Epaphroditus, one of their body, with a liberal contribution for his relief. This he gratefully acknowledges in this epistle, the principal object of which, as of many others, is to exhort those



## SEC. VII. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 123

to whom he writes to persevere in the purity of the gospel, and to resist the attempts of the Judaizing teachers to sow divisions among them, and especially to recommend their profession by a suitable life and conversation. The manner in which he speaks of his own situation, and the satisfaction he expresses in all that he had done, and suffered, for the sake of the gospel, is equally edifying. He appears when he wrote this epistle, to have had hopes of being set at liberty ; but as to himself, he says it was a matter of indifference whether he lived or died, provided his life or death might be subservient, as he was confident either of them would be, to the propagation of the gospel.

Colosse was a considerable city in Phrygia, where there appears to have been a christian church pretty early, though it is not known by whom it was planted. Probably, however, it was by some of Paul's fellow labourers, during his long residence at Ephesus, or perhaps by himself. His epistle to the christians at that place appears to have been written some time before the end of the year 62, and to have been sent along with that to Philemon, by Tychicus and Onesimus, when Paul had some prospect of being released from his confinement. The general strain of it is so much the same with that to the Ephesians, that they are commonly called the two sister epistles. In both of them

them the object of the apostle was to establish those to whom they were addressed in the pure faith of the gospel, on the value of which he much enlarges, in opposition to the corruption of it by the Jewish Gnostics; and he strongly urges the practice of moral duties, which the Gnostics, too much occupied with matters of speculation, were generally charged with neglecting.

Philemon was a citizen of Colosse, whose slave Onesimus had run away from him, and probably robbed him; but coming to Rome while Paul was there, and hearing him preach, he not only became a convert to christianity, but made himself useful to the apostle. Being, no doubt, convinced by him of the wrong that he had done his master, he was prevailed upon to return to him; and to make his reception the easier, Paul gave him this letter, which at the same time that it shews his just sense of moral obligation, discovers much polite address; from which it is evident that the apostle was no wild enthusiast, but one who was well acquainted with mankind, and human nature.

Notwithstanding the epistle to the Hebrews does not bear the name of Paul, there are in my opinion, many internal marks of its being his; and it was probably written by him, if after he was at liberty, before he left Italy, A. D. 63. Like the epistle to the Romans, it is properly *a treatise*, the  
object

object of which is to lessen the excessive regard which the Jewish christians of that age entertained for the institutions of Moses, which made them wish to impose them on the gentile converts. With this view the writer endeavours to shew the superiority of Christ to Moses, and of the christian dispensation to the Jewish, in a variety of respects ; asserting that whatever there was that was most esteemed in the institutions of Moses, there was something of the same nature, and superior in kind, in the gospel. More particularly, as the Jews made great boasts of their priesthood, their temple, and their sacrifices, he finds a temple, a priesthood, and a sacrifice in christianity. But in this there was much room for imagination, and for fancying there was a correspondence in the two systems, where none was intended in the original constitution of them.

After writing this epistle, it is conjectured that Paul might go to Jerusalem ; but that finding every thing in confusion there, as it was but a short time before the breaking out of the Jewish war, he did not continue long in the country ; and as he had expressed an intention of visiting Spain, it is not improbable but that with this view he went to Rome, and being there at the time of the persecution by Nero, he was, according to tradition, beheaded by order of that tyrant, or his ministers ;  
being

being exempted from torture as a Roman citizen, while Peter, who was there at the same time, was crucified.

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## SECTION VIII.

### *Of the Labours of the other Apostles.*

**A**FTER giving this particular account of Paul, his labours, and his writings, which his own epistles, as well as the *Acts of the apostles*, written by his companion Luke, happily enabled us to do; I shall give the little that I have been able to collect of what was done, or written, by the other apostles, before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was then approaching.

James, called the brother of our Lord, probably ended his course during the confinement of Paul at Rome, after writing the epistle which bears his name. The object of it is to enforce a variety of moral duties, which were much neglected by the Jews of that age; and it seems to have been designed for the use of the unbelieving, as well

well as the believing, Jews, It is said that he was generally known by the surname of James *the just*, no doubt for his exemplary virtue and piety, for which he was highly esteemed by the sober part of the nation in general.

According to Eusebius\*, the Jews, disappointed of their wicked purpose respecting Paul, when he was sent to Rome, were the more exasperated against the other christians, and especially James ; and on the death of Festus (there being some interval between that event and the arrival of Albinus, the next Roman governor) they put him to death in a tumultuous manner. Many of the circumstances, as related by Hegesippus, seem to be fabulous ; but it may be true that, upon his persisting in giving his testimony to the messiahship of Jesus, he was sentenced to be stoned as a blasphemer, and that this was put in execution, after first throwing him down from some part of the temple ; and that while he was praying for his persecutors, he was dispatched by the blow of a fuller's pole. Josephus says, that this James, and others, were sentenced to be stoned by the supreme council of the nation, before the arrival of Albinus, as violators of the law ; but that the more sober part of the citizens were offended at it, as an illegal proceeding ; also that Albinus, being by their means informed

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\*Hist. Lib. ii. Cap. 23. p. 77.

of their proceedings, wrote to the high-priest, threatening to punish him for it.\*

Peter, having, as we have seen, been at Antioch, had probably preached chiefly in Asia Minor, especially in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythina, because his first epistle is directed to the christians in those places. It seems to have been written not long after Paul was released from Rome; and as it contains salutations from the church at Babylon, where at that time there were many Jews, some of whom, no doubt, were christians, it is probable that he wrote from this place; though he might afterwards go to Rome, and there write his second epistle, as according to tradition, he suffered martyrdom there. It is also said that the wife of Peter suffered at the same time, and that when he saw her going to execution, he rejoiced that God had called her to so glorious a death.† Some say that Peter not thinking himself worthy to suffer in the same manner as his master had done, was, at his own request, crucified with his head downwards.

The object of Peter's first epistle is to exhort the christians to whom he wrote, to persevere in the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding the difficulties under which they then laboured. With  
this

\*Ant. Lib. xx. Cap. 8. p. 896.

†Euseb, Hist. Lib. iii, Cap. 30. p. 124.

this view he represents to them, in a very strong light, the honour and advantage they derived from the knowledge of the gospel ; and having enlarged on this, he exhorts them to adorn their profession of it by the observance of the moral duties of life, which he particularly enumerates.

The second epistle of Peter is a supplement to the former, and in this he warns christians more particularly of their danger from those who corrupted the gospel, and whose practices were, as was generally believed, as licentious as their principles ; alluding, no doubt, to the Gnostic teachers of that age. He also exhorts to vigilance, and constancy in the discharge of our duty, from the consideration of the dissolution of the world, and the coming of Christ to judgement. In these two epistles of Peter many attentive readers have observed that, without much regularity of composition, or clearness of expression, there is a peculiar dignity and energy exceeding any thing in the writings of Paul, and worthy of the prince of the apostles.

Though much of what is related by Eusebius\* concerning the meeting of Peter and Simon Magus at Rome, be unquestionably fabulous, and the Clementine Homilies are evidently a romance, it is not improbable but that some well known intercourse between them might have given occasion to both.

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\* Hist. Lib. ii. Cap. 14. p. 63.

As Simon probably abandoned the profession of christianity, and distinguished himself by travelling into distant countries, teaching his principles wherever he came, he might well meet with Peter, and they might have several disputations ; Simon confiding in his eloquence and address, and Peter, though destitute of those advantages, yet possessing others of a superior nature, not likely to decline an interview with him.

The epistle of Jude was probably written upon the same occasion, and about the same time, with the last of Peter ; being evidently intended to guard christians against the principles and practices of the Gnostics. We know very little else concerning this apostle, who is otherwise called Lebbeus, and Thaddeus, the brother of James, the son of Alphaeus, probably the same with ~~Stephanas~~ <sup>Strophas</sup>, and together with him called the brother of our Lord. Where this apostle lived, or how he died, we are not informed ; but probably he continued in some part of Judea till the breaking out of the war.

The apostle Philip is said to have lived chiefly at Hierapolis ; and Papias, one of the first bishops of that place, says, that a person was raised to life by him. The same writer says that Justus, surnamed Barsabas, who was thought by the apostles to be a proper person to succeed Judas Iscariot,



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as well as Matthias on whom the lot fell, having drank poison, received no injury from it\*.

Bartholomew, who was probably the same with Nathaniel, appears to have preached in India. For there, according to Eusebius†, Pantenus found a Hebrew gospel of Matthew, which had been left by him, and also many christians, who may be supposed to have been the descendants of his converts.

As the epistles of John, and also the book of Revelation, were probably written after the destruction of Jerusalem, I shall not speak of them in this place ; but it is probable that his Gospel, as well as the three others, were written about the time that Peter and Jude wrote their epistles, viz. on the approach of the Jewish war ; when the general dispersion of the disciples was foreseen, and it was evident that the apostles could not continue long upon the stage.

It is generally thought that the gospel of Matthew was written first ; but as it is pretty evident that neither Mark nor Luke had seen it, it could not have been published long before they wrote. This gospel was probably written in Hebrew ; but as the two first chapters, which contain the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus, were not in  
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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 39. p. 137.

† Lib. v. Cap. 10. p. 223.

the Ebionite copies of this gospel, I take it for granted they were not written by Matthew, but were prefixed to his gospel afterwards. As the learned Symmachus, in his commentary on this gospel\*, endeavoured to disapprove the story of the miraculous conception, it could not have been thought by him to have been a part of the authentic COPY.

Mark, the son of Barnabas's sister, and his companion as well as Paul's, is said to have been, in the latter part of his life, the companion of Peter, and to have written his Gospel under the inspection, and with the approbation of that apostle†. Mark is also said to have ended his days at Alexandria in Egypt‡.

Luke is said to have been a physician at Antioch, and together with Mark and Barnabas, to have been one of the seventy disciples§. He evidently wrote the *Acts of the apostles* after Paul's acquittal at Rome, and his Gospel some time before.

John is said to have written his Gospel at the request of the church of Ephesus, after the publication of the other three, to supply their defects.

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 17. p. 278.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. ii. Cap. 15. p. 64.

‡ Ib. Lib. ii. Cap. 16. p. 65.

§ Ib. Lib. iii. Cap. 4. p. 91.

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defects. It also appears to have been a principal object with him, in his Gospel, as well as in his epistles, to obviate the cavils of the Gnostics, shewing that Jesus had real flesh and blood, like other men, and that *the Christ* was not a person distinct from him, but that Jesus himself was the Christ, the Son of God.

What became of the apostles whose names have not yet been mentioned is now unknown, except that Thomas is said to have preached in Parthia, and Andrew in Scythia, but with what success is not said\*.

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## SECTION IX.

### *Of the Persecution under Nero.*

**T**ILL the reign of Nero, the Roman emperors had done nothing that was hostile to christianity, having probably considered the christians as a sect of the Jews, with whose customs they were well acquainted, and whom they had always tolerated, in all the provinces of the empire. But  
the

\* Euf. Lib. iii. Cap. 1. p. 87.

the enmity which the Jews bore them would in time shew that they were a distinct body of men, and profelytes made by the Jews were few compared with those that were made by christians. Their converts were so numerous, that by this time it began to be apprehended that there might be some danger of the rites of the heathen religion being discontinued, and upon the observance of these it was imagined that the welfare of the state depended. The zealous heathens, therefore, must have looked with an evil eye upon the christian missionaries, independently of the many, who, like Demetrius of Ephesus, were personally interested in the support of the ancient worship.

Besides, the christians, teaching a new religion which was hostile to all others, and aimed at nothing less than the utter subversion of the worship that had hitherto been paid to the heathen gods, were in common language said to be guilty of the same *impiety* with which others who had at any time neglected the worship of the gods had been charged; and with the guilt of impiety was connected the idea of many horrid crimes. On this account the christians being considered as *prophane* and *impious* people, by those who did not trouble themselves to make any inquiry into their principles and conduct, when it suited Nero's purpose to persecute the christians, great numbers were well prepared to second

could his views, and to make very light of any sufferings to which they could be exposed.

We have no distinct account of this persecution of Nero by any christian writer who lived at or near the time ; but it appears from the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius, that when this emperor had wantonly set fire to the city of Rome, taking advantage of the general odium under which the christians then lay, he gave out that it was done by them ; and though no credit was given to the accusation, yet on that pretence he exercised upon them, with the concurrence of the people, the most shocking barbarities. They were imprisoned and tortured. Some were crucified, and others were impaled, being held in an upright position by stakes thrust through their jaws ; and some were thrown to the wild beasts. But what was particularly insulting and cruel, great numbers of them, wrapped in garments dipped in pitch, and other combustibles, were fastened to posts, and fire was put to them, that they might give light to the city, and expire in this most excruciating torture. Nero is said to have illuminated his own gardens in this shocking manner, and by this light to have amused himself in driving his chariot. In this persecution the tender sex was not spared, and notwithstanding the general odium under which the christians then lay, these cruelties excited the compassion

passion of many, who could not but perceive that these sacrifices were made to gratify the cruelty and caprice of one man, and not for any purpose of public utility\*.

In what manner the order was given for this persecution we are not told, but it was probably by a decree of the senate, which always exercised the power of checking foreign religions, it being thought to be their province in this, as well as in every other method, to take care of the state. And if this persecution was authorised by a decree of the senate, it probably extended to all parts of the Roman empire; and, not being repealed, would be a standing rule for the proceedings of the governors of provinces, though they would, no doubt, execute the law with more or less rigour, according to their own dispositions. The persecution of christians, therefore, being once begun in this manner, would be continued in all future time, without any new law.

That this persecution of Nero did extend to the remote provinces is expressly asserted by Orosius†, and is also evident from a inscription found in Spain in honour of Nero, *for clearing the province of*

\* Tacit An. Lib. xv. S. 44. Sueton. Nero, S. 16.

† Primus Romæ christianos supplicii et mortibus adfecit, ac per omnes provincias pari persecutione ex-cruciari imperavit. Lib. vii. Cap. 7. p. 473. Ed. Hævercamp.

*of robbers, and of those who taught mankind a new superstition.* For in this manner were the christians at that time usually characterized by the heathens\*.

Considering the great number of christians who must have perished at Rome only in this persecution (Tacitus saying they were a great multitude, *ingens multitudo*) and that, in the most violent persecutions, they who suffer are few in comparison of those who, by some means or other, escape; this history affords an indisputable proof of the great progress that christianity had made in the age of the apostles. Indeed, to have incurred the general hatred that Tacitus mentions, which implies that they had drawn a great degree of attention upon them, they must have been very numerous; and Nero must have been sensible of it, or he could never have thought of taking advantage of the circumstance in order to screen himself from public resentment. And there can be no doubt, but that there were at that time many more christians in Antioch, Ephesus, and other great cities, in the eastern provinces, than in Rome, where it is not probable that any apostle had preached before Paul, and he not more than two years; though a foundation had been laid, and a christian

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church

\* See an account of this in Lardner's *Heathen Testimonies*, Chap. 3. Works, Vol. vii. p. 248.

church had been established there before his arrival.

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## SECTION X.

*Of the Calamities of the Jews, and of the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.*

IT was in the reign of Nero that the war broke out between the Jews and the Romans, in the course of which the former suffered more than any other people are known to have done in the same space of time. In these events our Saviour's prophecies concerning the calamities of the nation, and particularly concerning the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and of the temple, were exactly fulfilled; and the verification of this prediction is the more remarkable, as the events are recorded not by a christian, but by a Jewish historian (Josephus) whose account is confirmed by the writings of several heathens.

They



The Jews had always very ill brooked their subjection to the Romans ; and when the first attempt was made to take the census among them, by Quirinus, governor of Syria, A. D. 9. there was a considerable revolt, headed by Judas of Galilee ; and though he and his party were soon suppressed, their principles had taken deep root in the country ; and whenever the Roman governors acted in an arbitrary and oppressive manner, as they often did, the people always shewed a disposition to rebel. What made the cause of the revolters more popular was the connexion which their principles of civil liberty was supposed to have with those of their religion, which gave them a high idea of the dignity of their nation, as the peculiar people of God. They ought, it was said, to have no other master but him, who was not only the sole object of their worship, but their proper civil governor also, the only lawful head of their nation.

That there were persons who had this idea, is evident from some of them putting this question to our Saviour, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not ?* And that this party was then numerous, and had great influence in public affairs, is evident from his prudent answer\*, *Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that*

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\* Matt. xxii. 21.

*are God's*, not chusing to give them any handle against him.

The same spirit of liberty and independence, joined to the contempt which the Jews entertained for other nations, made them generally hated by the populace wherever they were settled ; though it is evident that many persons of reflection respected them on account of their religion, which appeared at first sight to be more rational than any that prevailed in other countries ; and it pleased divine providence that most people should have an opportunity of forming a judgment in the case. It is remarkable that there was no city of any consequence, in all the eastern part of the world, in which there was not, in very early times a considerable number of Jews. It appears from the book of Esther, that the Jews were then settled in all the provinces of the Persian empire, but few of them having returned to Judea after the Babylonish captivity, and being favoured by Cyrus and the succeeding kings of Persia. They had no less favour shewn them by Alexander the Great and in general by his successors, both in Syria and Egypt, especially in the latter, where they were a great proportion of the inhabitants of Alexandria. Under the Maccabees they had a league with the Romans, and though the Roman emperors afterwards took the government of the country into their

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own hands, they did not diminish their privileges in any other part of the empire.

It was in Egypt, which at this time is supposed to have contained not less than a million of Jews, that the hatred of the other inhabitants first shewed itself in any open acts of violence. Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great, being appointed king of Judea by Caligula, and going through Egypt, was insulted in Alexandria by a mock procession, in ridicule of him and his kingdom ; and the populace being favoured by the governor Flaccus, would place a statue of the emperor (who had insisted upon being worshipped as a God) in the Jewish synagogues. In this tumult many synagogues of the Jews were demolished and burned.

The Jews were then deprived, by order of the governor, of their privilege of citizens, and confined to a small quarter of the town ; in consequence of which the houses and shops, which they had been obliged to abandon, were plundered, and in the progress of the tumult many of the Jews were burned alive, and dragged through the streets. The account of these cruelties greatly amused the brutal emperor ; and when an embassy was sent to him from the Jews of Alexandria, with the celebrated Philo at their head, he behaved to them with a studied neglect and contempt, on finding that they persisted

persisted in refusing to acknowledge his divinity; and it was with great difficulty that Agrippa himself, who had returned to Rome, had been able to soften his resentment against the whole Jewish nation; and the effect of his interposition was not lasting. It is probable that his death only saved them from his utmost vengeance. Claudius, however, reversed what Caligula had done, and restored the Jews of Alexandria to their former privileges.

About the same time the Greeks and Syrians in conjunction destroyed more than fifty thousand Jews, in Seleucia and its neighbourhood, occasioned originally by a Jewish governor of the province having rendered himself odious to the inhabitants.

The disturbances in Judea itself, began under the administration of Cumanus, A. D. 49. by a Roman soldier, at the feast of passover, shewing, by a very indecent attitude, his contempt of the Jews, and their religion. This provoked the populace to revenge themselves by throwing stones, and insulting the governor. But when he sent for the troops that were stationed in the town, the people, not being prepared to encounter them, fled; and in the confusion pressed upon one another in such a manner, that twenty thousand of them are said to have perished on this occasion.

Under

Under the government of this Cumanus, the Samaritans insulted the Galileans in their passage through their country to Jerusalem, on one of their public festivals ; and on this occasion many of the Jews were killed, especially as the governor took the part of the Samaritans. However, at the intercession of Agrippa, justice was done to the Jews at this time, and Cumanus was sent into banishment. Then it was that Felix was made governor of the country.

Under the administration of Felix, A. D. 53, there appeared a Jewish impostor from Egypt, who, being followed by a multitude of people, advanced as far as the mount of Olives ; he promising that they would see the walls of the city fall down before them. Felix, however, marched out against them, and presently dispersed them, killing about four hundred, and taking two hundred of them prisoners ; but their leader made his escape. It was this Egyptian that Lyfias supposed Paul to have been. About the same time other impostors appeared in the wilderness, or the mountainous and less populous parts of the country, deceiving the people by their magnificent promises ; but they were soon suppressed, and great numbers of them were crucified.

Felix,

Felix, having been guilty of many excesses, was frequently admonished by Jonathan the high-priest ; till at length, provoked at his freedom, he got him to be assassinated by some of the robbers, with whom the country at that time swarmed, and who from carrying about them short daggers (in Latin *sica*) were by the Romans called *sicarii*. The character of these men was a strange mixture of barbarity and religion. They shewed great zeal for the law and the temple ; and exclaiming every where against the Roman government, and being men of desperate fortunes, they were perpetually urging the people to revolt. Festus, who succeeded Felix, A. D. 56, found the country full of these banditti, and, like Felix, he also suppressed an insurrection headed by an impostor, who had drawn after him a great number into the wilderness by vain promises of deliverance from their servitude. Thus was our Saviour's prediction concerning false christs and false prophets\* remarkably verified.

The farther and more serious calamities of the Jews were preceded by a very extraordinary circumstance, though perhaps not of a miraculous nature. One Jesus, the son of Ananus, coming from the country, began to cry in the temple. " A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice

\* Matt. xxiv. 11:

“ voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem, and against the temple, &c.” Whatever was said or done to this man, he continued to bawl out in this manner, with little variation. When he was cruelly scourged by order of Albinus the governor, he kept crying, as if he had felt nothing for himself, “ Woe to Jerusalem,” &c. This he continued to practice with little interruption during the space of seven years and five months. When the city was besieged, he kept repeating his lamentable prognostic, “ Woe to Jerusalem, woe to the temple, woe to the people ;” and lastly, what he was not observed ever to have said before, “ Woe to myself ;” when immediately a stone from one of the Roman engines dashed him to pieces\*.

Other things called *prodigies* are said to have happened previous to the war, most of them probably imaginary, or fabulous. Among others it is said that the eastern gate of the temple, which was of brass, and so heavy that twenty men could barely move it, opened of itself in the night; and that at the feast of Pentecost, while the priests were performing their functions, they first heard a rushing noise, and then a distinct voice, saying, “ Let us go hence†.”

The year after this, viz. A. D. 66, the government of Florus being insupportable, and the Jews

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\*Josephus de Bello Jud. Lib. vii. Cap. 12. † Ibid.

obtaining no redress by their application to Cestius Gallus the governor of Syria (to which Judea was a subordinate province) broke out into open rebellion, Agrippa did every thing in his power to dissuade them from so fatal a resolution ; but making no impression upon them, he thought proper to quit Jerusalem. The first effect of their unbridled resentment was seizing the fortrefs of Massada, and killing all the Romans they found there. After this Eleazar, a headstrong young man, son of the high priest Ananus, and captain of the temple, persuaded the people not to receive the usual offerings in the name of the emperor. They then attacked the fortrefs of Antonia, which was near the temple; and when they had taken it, they put to death all the Romans they found in it. The chief actor in this scene of butchery was Menahem, the son of Judas of Galilee, mentioned above.

About the same time that these things were transacting at Jerusalem, there was an insurrection of the inhabitants of Cæsarea against the Jews of that place ; and Florus taking an active part against the Jews, more than twenty thousand of them were killed, and the rest enslaved. This massacre at Cæsarea so provoked the Jews, that, with great rage, they rose in arms in all parts of the country, and attacking every place in which there were any Romans, they made great destruction among



among them, burning several towns, and killing many people. But these barbarities were severely retorted by the Syrians, and others, against the Jews, who were not provided for any regular attack or defence of any place, so that the whole country was full of slaughter and confusion. At Scythopolis more than thirteen thousand Jews were killed; at Ascalon and Ptolemais two thousand in each, with many at Tyre. At Alexandria, where they had suffered so much before, more than fifty thousand were now slain. All this, however was, only *the beginning of sorrows* to this devoted nation.

Cestius Gallus, seeing the Jews every where in arms, thought it high time for him to interpose, and endeavour to quell the revolt. He therefore took one legion with his auxiliaries, and, being conducted by Agrippa, he came first to Joppa, which he took, and burned, killing all the Jews in it, to the number of eight thousand and four hundred, whilst his Lieutenant Gallus, in Galilee, killed more than two thousand. But Cestius advancing to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, the inhabitants marched out against him in such numbers, that though they fought with little or no discipline, they gained a considerable advantage over him, killing five hundred and fifteen of his men, with very little loss on their side.

Without

Without being discouraged by this repulse Cestius advanced to the city, and took possession of what was called Bezetha, or the new town, which was but slightly fortified ; and it was not doubted by Josephus, but that if he had pushed the assault, he might at that time have made himself master of the place ; but without any apparent reason he retired, and the Jews pursuing him to Antipatris, killed five thousand three hundred of his infantry, and nine hundred and eighty of his cavalry. They also took his baggage, and his military engines, of which they made great use in the defence of the city afterwards. This action happened on the eighth of November in the tenth year of Nero, A. D. 66 and the advantage which the Jews gained in it greatly encouraged them to persist in the war, notwithstanding the dreadful losses they sustained on all other occasions\*. At Damascus, about this time, ten thousand of them were destroyed by the other inhabitants.

At Jerusalem, the Jews finding themselves engaged in a serious war, began to proceed with some more regularity, and appointed three commanders in chief, Joseph the son of Gorion, Ananus the son of another Gorion who had been high-priest, and Joseph the historian, who had the command in Galilee. At Jerusalem, Ananus had  
much

\* Josephus de Bello Jud. Lib. ii. Cap. 24.

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much trouble with the seditious Sicarii, and endeavoured to apprehend Simon the son of Gioras, who was at the head of a great party of them, plundering the country, but he escaped to Masfada.

At the breaking out of this war, Nero was in Achaia, and being dissatisfied with the conduct of Cestius, he gave the command to Vespasian, who sent his son Titus to Alexandria, to bring some legions which were stationed there, while he advanced to Syria. This was the situation of things at the end of the year 66.

At the beginning of the next year, Titus joined his father at Ptolemais, and then the whole Roman army, including auxiliaries, amounted to sixty thousand. The only considerable resistance that Vespasian met with was at Jotapata, where Josephus commanded; but after forty days the place was taken and destroyed, and Josephus, who had escaped, soon after surrendered to the Romans. In the course of this year Vespasian and his son made themselves masters of all Galilee, selling the inhabitants for slaves. But John the son of Levi who commanded the seditious Sicarii in that part of the country, and who had been very troublesome to Josephus, made his escape to Jerusalem.

At this time many of the elderly people were for peace, but they were not able to restrain the violence

violence of the rest ; and the Sicarii getting into the city, massacred without mercy whom they pleased, in order to possess themselves of their wealth, especially on the pretence of their being for peace with the Romans, and forming designs to deliver up the city. John, who at first had taken part with Ananus, who commanded in the town, soon joined these Sicarii, and kept possession of the temple against him. Not finding themselves strong enough, they got twenty thousand Idumeans introduced into the town ; and then breaking out upon the inhabitants, they killed the next day eight thousand five hundred persons, and among the rest Ananus himself. The havoc they made in the city was so great, that twelve thousand persons were left by them unburied. At length the Idumeans were shocked with the conduct of their associates, and left the city.

While the Jews at Jerusalem were thus madly employed in destroying one another, Vespasian perceiving how much this was to his advantage, refrained from making any attempt upon the place, but possessed himself of all the country, except the castle of Macheron. On the death of Nero, the troops of Vespasian saluted him emperor, and the command of the army devolved upon his son Titus.

It

It was in the interval between the retreat of Cestius and the approach of Titus, that the christians, in the city and country, warned by the prophecies of our Saviour, and, as Eusebius moreover says\*, by persons divinely inspired, all fled into the dominions of Agrippa, beyond the sea of Galilee, residing chiefly in the city of Pella, and its neighbourhood. There they continued several centuries, though gradually diminished in numbers, till at length they became extinct. Many of them, however, returned after the war, and continued at Jerusalem till the time of Adrian.

Before the approach of Titus, the Jews had been far from making any advantage of the absence of their enemies. On the contrary, they had been doing themselves infinite mischief by their divisions; so that at his approach there were three hostile factions in the place. The interior part of the temple was held by Eleazar, whose partisans were not numerous, but they were the best fortified. John was in the outer part of the temple, and Simon the son of Gioras commanded in the town at large. This Simon had been ravaging the country, and had been let into the city by the people to oppose John, whose followers were guilty of the greatest excesses, and who, it was feared, would even set fire to the city.

In

In the daily struggle between these factions all the stores of provisions in the place, which might have sufficed for a long siege, were wontonly destroyed ; and the temple itself was often full of blood and dead bodies. At length Eleazar, admitting the followers of John to worship in the temple, was overpowered and slain by some of them who had arms concealed under their garments, so that all the Sicarii were then under John, whose armed followers were eight thousand and four hundred, while those of Simon, who held the city, were ten thousand besides five thousand Idumeans. These parties, though so hostile to each other, always united against the Romans.

Titus brought with him four legions besides auxiliary troops, and arrived a short time before the passover, so that the city was full of people, who soon consumed what provisions were in it ; and the consequence of this was extreme famine, and its constant attendant pestilence. On the passover preceding, an estimate had been made of the people who resorted to Jerusalem, by counting the number of lambs that were killed for the purpose ; from which it was computed that they did not amount to less than two millions five hundred and fifty-six thousand ; but it cannot be supposed that the city contained half this number when it was actually besieged

besieged, especially as the arrival of Titus was a little before the passover. For tho' great numbers would crowd in, regardless of all consequences, many, no doubt, would be deterred from entering in those circumstances.

The greatest part of the distress of the Jews in this most memorable siege arose not from their enemies, but from themselves. Titus having soon made himself master of every thing to the north of the tower of Antonia, which was not far from the temple, endeavoured by all gentle methods to bring the inhabitants terms, and gave leave to all who chose it to leave the place, but this was prevented by the leaders of the factions. Josephus by order of Titus addressed the people in a long and affectionate speech, but this also produced no effect. What the people suffered from the attacks of the Romans was very inconsiderable, notwithstanding they employed all their usual methods of assault, such as battering rams, balistæ, and the like; but the dreadful effects of famine were soon felt in the extreme. A woman of some rank, and in good circumstances, was found eating her own child, a thing to which the Jews would have much greater aversion than any other people. Thousands would, no doubt, chuse to languish and die rather than have recourse to so horrible a method of prolonging their lives; and yet this cannot be supposed to have been the only instance of the kind.

The followers of John and Simon were guilty of the most shocking cruelties in order to secure provisions for themselves, torturing and putting to death without mercy ; and yet, notwithstanding this resource, the men in arms were obliged to go without the walls to search for whatever they could find that was eatable. These Titus, when he could seize them, crucified, sometimes five hundred in a day, so that at length they could not find wood for crosses, or room to erect them. Some of them Titus sent back with their hands cut off, and otherwise maimed ; but this had no effect whatever on those within the city.

Titus, perceiving that all his attempts to reduce the place by force were in vain, such was the strength of the walls, and the desperate courage of those who defended them, and knowing that the famine would in time do the business for him, at length endeavoured to quicken the effects of it by making a wall of *circumvallation*, as it was termed, quite round the place ; and thereby prevent any from going in, or coming out of it. This occasioned a dreadful increase of the mortality within the city ; so that the living not being able to bury the dead, contented themselves with throwing them over the walls. Titus seeing the ditch full of dead bodies was so much affected with it, that it is said, he lifted up his hands to heaven, and called God to witness that this was not owing to him.

Notwith-



Notwithstanding the care that was taken to prevent any persons escaping to the enemy, before the building of the wall of circumvallation, many did get out, and the humanity of the Romans received them ; but some of them being observed to examine their excrements, in order to pick out of them the money, jewels, &c. which (having no other method of concealing) they had swallowed, the Arabians and Syrians in the army privately killed great numbers of them, in hopes of finding treasure. In one night two thousand were found dispatched for this purpose ; and though Titus, on discovering it, threatened to punish such enormities with death, it did not prevent many murders being still committed with this view.

While the poor were carried out at the gates, to be buried at the public expence, a deserter told Titus, that at one of the gates where he was stationed, there were carried out one hundred and fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty, between the fourteenth of April, when the siege commenced, and the first of July. Another said that they had carried out at all the gates six hundred thousand, and that then being unable to carry them all out, they had filled whole houses with them, and shut them up.

On the seventeenth of July, Titus took the citadel of Antonia, and consequently approached the temple ; and at that time the daily sacrifice was discontinued

discontinued for want of victims. On the eighth of August the Romans, not being able to make any impression upon the second inclosure of the temple, set fire to the gates, which soon extended itself to the galleries, and continued to rage the remainder of that day and the following night, so that they were now in possession of the outward court, in which was the altar of burnt offering. Titus would still have saved the body of the temple, consisting of the holy and most holy places ; but a soldier setting fire to a building that was contiguous to it, this also took fire and notwithstanding, the endeavours of Titus to prevent it, was burned to the ground. This was on the tenth of the month Ab, the fifth month from the passover in Nisan, and as Josephus says, on the same day of the year on which it had been burned in the time of Nebuchadnezzar\*.

There perished in and about the temple six thousand men, women, and children, deceived by a prophecy, which promised them some extraordinary appearance in their favour. There were several of these false prophets, who perpetually deceived the people, and prevented many from going over to the Romans.

Titus was now completely master of the place, and as soon as possible he put an end to the slaughter ; John and Simon, who had surrendered, being reserved

reserved to grace his triumph. It was supposed that one million one hundred and ten thousand people perished in this siege, and ninety-seven thousand were exposed to sale, but at length they could find no purchasers.

On the birth-day of his brother Domitian, more than two thousand five hundred Jews were massacred, some by fire, some by wild beasts, and others as gladiators. A great number also were destroyed at some games which Titus exhibited at Berytus, on the celebration of his father's accession to the empire. At his own triumph, John and Simon, with seven hundred Jews, were led in procession, after which Simon was put to death, and probably John also. In this triumph the golden candlestick with seven branches, the same probably which had been carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and restored by Cyrus, with other holy vessels, were publicly exhibited; and the figures of them may still be perceived on the triumphal arch which was erected on this occasion at Rome.

The entire conquest of the country was completed by Titus's lieutenants; the last place that held out being the fortress of Massada, which was deemed to be impregnable. There Eleazar, the grandson of Judas of Galilee, commanded; but seeing no means of escape, he advised his followers to die by their own hands, rather than surrender to the Romans. This advice they took; and  
having

having first killed their wives and children, they dispatched one another, to the number of six hundred and ninety. This was the fifteenth of April, A. D. 73, seven years after the commencement of the war\*.

After the reduction of Judea, the Sicarii still created disturbances in Egypt and Cyrene, where one Jonathan induced many to follow him into the desert, by the promise of performing miracles; but he was soon overpowered by the governor of the province, carried to Rome, and burned alive. Three thousand were massacred on this occasion, and it is computed that there perished in the whole of this fatal war one million, three hundred and thirty-seven thousand four hundred and ninety, besides many of whom no account could be collected.

Such was the dreadful issue of this war, terminating in the utter downfall of the Jewish state and nation, from which it has never recovered to this day, involving in it the destruction of the temple and the discontinuance of the services annexed to it. The desolation of the country itself went on increasing, till, from being, for its size, one of the most fertile and populous countries in the world, it is now the most barren and desolate, fifty thousand being the latest computation of the number of all its inhabitants†.

All

\* De Bello Judaico, Lib. vii. Cap. 28.

† This is the computation of Volney, but travellers

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All these calamities were, no doubt, accomplished by natural causes, and therefore might have been expected from a thorough knowledge of the temper of the inhabitants, their refractory disposition towards the Romans, their factions among themselves, and their absurd confidence in supernatural assistance, joined to a knowledge of their real weakness, compared with the overbearing power of the Roman empire. But who besides the Supreme Being could have foreseen all these circumstances, or have known that the operation of them would have led to this precise catastrophe, when the rebellion might have terminated in many other ways, and not in such a total ruin of the country, and dispersion of its inhabitants. The divine foresight is therefore conspicuous in our Saviour's clear prediction of these events, with all their capital circumstances, which every reader of this narrative must perceive, when it does not appear that any other person had the least apprehension of such a thing. The Jews now say, that our Saviour found all that he foretold in the prophecies of Daniel; but why did not their own scribes, the professed interpreters of the law and the prophets, and the leading men of their own nation, discover the same in that book?

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with whom I have conversed, and on whom I can depend, say that they must be more than twice that number.

The justice and wisdom of the Supreme Being are equally conspicuous in this great event. A particular providence had ever attended that people. They had always flourished while they were obedient to God and his prophets, and calamity of some kind or other had been the never failing consequence of their disobedience ; and never had the nation in general shown a more perverse and obstinate disposition towards any prophets, than they did with respect to Christ and the apostles, though no prophets had ever been sent to them with more evident marks of a divine mission. Their inveteracy to christianity continues in a great measure to this day, and so does their dispersion, though they are still a distinct people, and never mix, so as to be confounded, with any of the nations among whom they are settled. But we may hope that the time is approaching when their unbelief in christianity and their calamities will both cease. A better disposition is already in some measure apparent in them, and the treatment they meet with from other nations is also better than it has been. May God hasten the time when this his favoured people shall, by their repentance and conversion to christianity, recover the place they formerly had in his favour, and in consequence of it be restored to their country, and be to the end of the world what prophecy assures us they will be, the most distinguished nation upon earth.

We

We may naturally lament this inveterate obstinacy in the great body of the Jews, and their rancorous opposition to christianity, at the promulgation of it ; but we may easily perceive that it was calculated to have the happiest effect with respect to the evidence, and consequently the moral influence, of christianity, and with that the happiness of all mankind in future time. It will now be forever unquestioned, that the rulers of the Jewish nation, in which christianity rose, were by no means favourable to it, and that the Jewish scriptures (the authenticity of which is supposed by the writers of the New Testament, and of which they availed themselves in proving the messiahship of Jesus) were no forgeries of theirs. At the same time it will be evident, that so many thousands of this obstinate nation, the most attached to their own laws, and so averse to the pretensions of such a messiah as Jesus was, could never have been brought to admit his claims, and become his disciples, at the risque of every thing dear to them in life, and of life itself, as was actually the case, without the most satisfactory evidence. This will also appear to have been the case while the facts were recent, while both the friends and the enemies of christianity had the best opportunity, and the strongest motives, to examine them with the greatest rigour.

## SECTION XI.

*General Observations on the Doctrine and Discipline of the Christian Church at this Period.*

IT is most evident, from the Acts of the Apostles, the history of which extends through almost the whole of the period, the events of which we have been reviewing, that no doctrine had been advanced by the apostles, and first preachers of christianity, that gave offence to the Jews, besides that of Jesus being the Messiah. Had there been any appearance of an infringement of the great doctrine of the *divine unity*, to which the Jews were then, and still continue to be, so much attached, by the advancement of any thing approaching to the doctrine that is now received of *the divinity of Christ*, it could not but have excited the greatest outcry imaginable ; as it did afterwards, when that doctrine was advanced, and as it continues to do at this very day.

As all the Jews expected that their Messiah would be a mere man, the natural descendant of David, it is evident that the apostles, and other primitive christians, who were all zealous Jews, must have received him as such. It is evident from



from the Gospels, and is acknowledged by all christian writers of the four first centuries, that the apostles considered him in no other light during the whole of their intercourse with him; having no idea of his being God, or the creator of the world under God. It is no less evident from the Acts of the apostles, and is also acknowledged by the same early writers, who were themselves trinitarians, that the apostles announced him as such to their nation and the world, viz. as nothing more than *a man approved of God by signs and wonders which God did by him*, and whom God had raised from the dead. And that they had any private information of their master being of a higher rank in the creation than themselves, but that they thought it prudent to use great reserve in the communication of this knowledge to others (though such is said to have been their conduct by the ancient trinitarian writers above referred to) is absolutely incredible.

Whenever any such doctrine as that of Christ being of a rank superior to that of man had been divulged, since no such person had ever been sent to the Jews before, or had been announced by any of their prophets (as they themselves understood their writings) to be sent to them in future, and as they could not conceive that any purpose of divine providence could require the interposition of such a Being, it must have excited the greatest astonishment

ment possible. The information could not but have been received with great doubt and hesitation by those who might have admitted it, and probably with absolute unbelief by many others. All this, joined to the offence which the divulging of such a doctrine would have given to the Jews, must have occasioned such a discussion of the question, and such controversies, and schisms, as we could not but have heard of. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is the objection which every Jew now makes to any attempts to convert him to christianity, and history shews this to have been the case from the time that it was generally received by christians. Yet at the first preaching of the gospel, thousands of the Jews were converted, without ever making such an objection; a plain proof that there was then no foundation for it, by such a doctrine being professed by any christians. There is not the least trace of any controversy whatever concerning the divinity or pre-existence of Christ in all the Acts of the apostles, or in any of the writings of the apostles, though they treat at large of such topics as excited the most attention for almost forty years after the first promulgation of christianity.

It is apparent from all these writings, that the only topic of discussion with the unbelieving Jews of that age was the Messiahship of Jesus; and among christians, the only articles of debate were the  
 proselyting

profelyting of Gentiles to christianity, without subjecting them to the laws of Moses, and the notions of the Gnostics. These were considered as subverting the fundamental principles of christianity, because they taught that it was not *Jesus* that was properly *the Christ*, or that he had not flesh and blood like other men; because they denied the doctrine of the resurrection, and because their principles gave countenance, as it was thought at least, to great immoralities. These therefore, Paul, Peter, Jude, and John, most strenuously opposed. But with respect to the doctrines of the divinity and pre-existence of Christ, which have engaged the attention of the christian world from about the middle of the second century to the present time, they are absolutely silent, and all that can be pretended is, that they incidentally mention, or allude to them.

It is something remarkable, however, that the most strenuous exertions of the apostles were not, in either of these cases, crowned with complete success. According to Justin Martyr, many of the Jewish christians were so much attached to their peculiar rites, that they could not reconcile themselves to the Gentile christians, who had not first become profelytes to Judaism, and they never had much esteem for the apostle Paul, who had been the great advocate for the liberty of the Gentile churches, and made no use of his writings. It can hardly be supposed, however, that this was the case  
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with the majority of the Jewish christians, considering the high commendation of Paul's epistles by Peter, and that in every thing he did he had the countenance of the other apostles.

It is possible that some expressions of Paul, which perhaps were unguarded, might be the reason of the dislike which the zealous Jewish christians in general had of him, and of the aversion they had to his writings. They have certainly been much misunderstood by christians, who have thence been led to imagine that he considered the laws of Moses as abolished by christianity, though his practice, which is certainly the best interpreter of his language, sufficiently proves that he could not have had any such meaning. This fact, however, among many others, shews that apostolical authority was not, in that age, of so great account as it was afterwards. The apostles were chiefly considered as witnesses of certain important facts, with which they were the best acquainted. Particular revelations were also made to some of them (though this was not confined to the apostles, as we see in the case of Agabus) and on these accounts they were respected, as any other prophets would have been; but their *opinions*, and judgments, as we may learn from what passed in the council of the apostles, and indeed from their taking so much pains as they did in their writings to convince other christians of the truth of their opinions, and the propriety

priety of the practices which they recommended, without deciding authoritatively, had no more weight than those of other men.

The Gnostics, though they were probably, in a great measure, silenced by the efforts of the apostles, which were certainly exerted to the utmost for the purpose, still kept their ground, and many of them had their separate assemblies, besides being mixed with other christians, as we learn from the epistles of John, which were written long after those of Paul, Peter, and Jude ; so that whatever effect these could have produced, it must by that time have been fully seen ; and in the age immediately following that of the apostles, they made a greater figure than ever they had done before. There was something in their principles so exceedingly plausible, and they were so generally received by all persons who pretended to philosophy, or more knowledge than the vulgar, that the better educated among the christian converts were generally taken with them.

The *evil* that is in the world could not, in their opinion, have had the same origin with the *good* that is in it ; not being able to conceive how evil, in so great an extent, could be subservient to good. So mixed a system as this is, they, therefore, thought to be unworthy of infinite wisdom and goodness. As to the doctrine of a soul, distinct from the body, which had pre-existed in an angelic state, and for  
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some offence committed in that state had been degraded, and confined to the body as a punishment, it had been the great doctrine of the Eastern sages from time immemorial; and so enchanting is the idea, that very few christians in proportion can even now be prevailed upon to part with it, and to believe with Moses that man was made *of the dust of the ground*, or wholly of what is called *matter*, which was afterwards made to breathe and live; and that this *breath*, or *life*, which is common to brute animals as well as men, is the highest sense of that word in the scriptures which we render *soul*.

The Gnostics also supposed that, besides those spiritual beings, which became the common souls of men, there were intelligences of a higher order, which sprung more immediately, and by way of direct emanation, from the supreme mind (for having no idea of the creation of any thing *out of nothing*, every thing of the nature of *mind* was supposed to have been derived ultimately from the one self-existing mind) and that these superior intelligences descended occasionally upon earth, either assuming the shadowy forms of men, or other things, or entering into men, and acting upon their organs, as demons were supposed to do in people who were insane.

These were the fundamental doctrines of the Gnostics, and they endeavoured to connect them with christianity, by supposing that Jesus was either

ther himself one of those superior intelligences, in the form of man, but without real flesh and blood, and without being subject to the pains and infirmities of human nature ; or that there descended into the man Jesus, one of those Beings of a higher order, and that it was this great Being, and not the man *Jesus*, who was properly the *Christ*, and who was appointed by God to act so important a part in the affairs of men. The apostles they considered as judging only by their senses, which were deceived in this case ; and though they gave entire credit to them with respect to every thing which they had seen, or heard, of Jesus, before, and after his resurrection, they considered them as plain unlettered men, who were ignorant of what was not within the sphere of their senses.

- As to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which they professed to hold in great contempt, as a mere clog to the immortal soul, they thought that nothing was meant by it, but either a moral change in the minds of men, which took place before they died ; or that it signified the ascent of the soul to its proper abode in the superior regions, when it was disengaged from its earthly incumbrance. This doctrine they might think (as many now do) would sufficiently answer the purpose of a future state of retribution, which alone is the great object and end of christianity, and of all religion, as well as the more simple, but to them the

more improbable doctrine, which the apostles taught, of a resurrection of any thing that had died, and had been committed to the grave.

That some of the Gnostics, in consequence of making no account of the body, might think that there was neither moral good nor evil in any thing relating to it, and might therefore think themselves at liberty to indulge themselves in any sensual excesses, is not impossible ; though it is more probable that every thing of this nature would be greatly exaggerated by the enemies of the Gnostics ; and the apostles themselves, being men, might too hastily give credit to what they had heard reported concerning them ; as very sensible and worthy men among the heathens for a long time did with respect to similar reports concerning christians in general ; and as many persons now do with respect to new sects in particular, and all those who, on other accounts, have become the objects of general dislike.

It cannot be denied, because it is clearly implied in the writings of the apostle Paul himself, that others of the Gnostics, who held the same general principle, of the infinite superiority of the mind to the body, were led by it to acts of mortification, abstaining from flesh meat, wine, and reprobating even marriage. That the Gnostics believed in a future state, and the divine mission of Christ, is evident from there being martyrs among  
them



them ; though others of them might not think that any *truth* was of so much consequence as that men should die for it, which we see to have been the case with many other christians who were not Gnostics.

The *religious rites* of christians of this early period, were few and simple. Their public worship was probably conducted as was that of the Jews, to which they had been accustomed in their synagogues, where the scriptures were always read, and prayers made, and where exhortations were occasionally given, and the portions of scripture, which were read in course, were sometimes expounded. To this they added the celebration of the eucharist, or eating bread and wine in remembrance of the death of Christ, but probably with little form, and in such a manner as to take up but little time.

We have no distinct account of the administration of baptism in this period ; but it is evident that very few words were employed in the business. In general, it was, no doubt, performed by the immersion of the body in water, that being an easy and a pleasant custom in hot climates, and the dress was such as to be very easily put off and on. The baths also would furnish conveniences for this ceremony in most places. In whatever the rite of baptism consisted, it was administered upon the simple profession of repentance, and faith in Christ;  
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the person who administered probably saying, "I baptize thee in the name of Jesus Christ," or varying the expression as he thought proper. If we may judge from the instances of baptism occasionally mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*, we may safely conclude that the persons who baptized did not think themselves obliged to make use of the form mentioned by Matthew, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," though nothing was originally meant by that, besides baptism into a religion which came from God, which was published by Christ, and confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit, or miracles.

The *church government* of the apostolic age was as simple as the rites of it. The persons who had the most authority were the *elders*, a title which had been borne by the rulers of the Jewish synagogues; and the same persons were indifferently called *bishops*, or *overseers*; having the general inspection of every thing relating to any particular church, and giving their time and attention to the concerns of it, according to their several qualifications; some in public teaching, others in keeping up order and discipline, others probably visiting the sick, and others instructing the young, &c.

It is not improbable but that when the book of Revelation was written, one of these elders in consequence of presiding (as some one of them must have done) when they were met to consult about

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about anything in common, might have obtained some title peculiar to himself, as that of *angel*, which is there used, though we never find any farther mention of it. Afterwards the title *bishop* became appropriated to this person, while the rest retained the original appellation of *presbyters*, which in a later period was changed into *priests*. But in all the early ages the bishop had no power, but as one of the body of elders, and what he derived from his personal influence; tho' this (as he would, of course, be the most respectable of the elders) would, no doubt, be considerable. There was, however, no act or office which might not have been done as regularly by any other of the elders as by himself, and he had no authority beyond his own church, or as we should say, parish.

Another order of persons in the primitive church, was that of *deacons*, a rank subordinate to that of elders. They were generally young men, whose business it was to attend to the secular affairs of the society, under the direction of the elders; but as an accurate distinction in offices was not much attended to, it is probable that the deacons were often employed in assisting the elders in their proper functions, for which they would by this means be gradually prepared. Thus the seven extraordinary deacons who were chosen to assist the apostles in the care of the poor, did not confine themselves to that

that office, but became, some of them at least, eminent preachers, like the apostles themselves, of which the history of Stephen and of Philip is a sufficient proof.

Women, and particularly widows who were poor, were in this age of primitive simplicity, employed in certain offices in the church, probably in attending the sick, assisting strangers, &c. for which they were allowed a certain stipend. To this, no doubt, Paul alludes when he says, *honour widows that are widows indeed*, as he alludes to the salaries of the elders where he says that, *they who have ruled well are worthy of double honour*. Such also is, no doubt, the meaning of the word *honour* in the fifth commandment. *Honour thy father and thy mother*, that is, give them a sufficient maintenance.

The fund for these expences was a common stock, to which every person contributed according to his ability, a collection being probably made for this purpose every Lord's day ; and out of it the poor were relieved, and the officers were paid, according to their occasions. The rich, no doubt, received nothing, but cheerfully gave their time and attendance to whatever business they undertook, and others received no more than was necessary to their comfortable subsistence, and decent appearance.

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The appointment of salaries, as well as the proportion of relief to the poor, and every thing else relating to the administration of the affairs of the society, was made by the vote of all the members of it, including the common people, as well as the elders and deacons. For such was the custom till a pretty late period in the history of christianity. But in those days of truly christian simplicity and zeal the great *object* and *use* of every particular regulation was more attended to, than any *honour* or *emolument* that resulted from it. Afterwards, alas ! the object was less thought of, and the personal consideration more ; till at length the latter wholly swallowed up the former ; places and appointments in the church being considered in no other light than as means of advancing men in rank and fortune in the world.

PERIOD

## P E R I O D II.

OF THE PERSECUTION BY DOMITIAN, AND  
THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
TO THE END OF THE REIGN OF ADRIAN,  
A. D. 138.

## SECTION I.

*From the death of Nero, A. D. 69, to that of Trajan, A. D. 117.*

**N**ERO had rendered himself so odious by his folly and cruelty, that after his death, it is probable that his measures would be as unpopular as himself; and therefore that, though the laws against christianity still subsisted they were not then generally executed. Acts of violence seldom continue long, humanity interposes, and the minds of the most cruel relent. There is at least a silence concerning any particular cruelties exercised against christians, from the death of Nero till the latter end of the reign of Domitian, a period of about thirty years, in which it cannot be doubted but

but that christianity continued to spread in all the provinces of the empire, as well as in other parts of the world. Eusebius expressly says, that Vespasian, attempted nothing against the christians\*. Domitian, however, who in the latter part of his reign, very much resembled Nero, imitated him also in his persecution of the christians, though he does not appear to have carried it on with the same violence; and he seems to have been led to it by his jealousy and dislike of the Jews.

The prophecies concerning a king, or a conqueror, to arise in the East, though Josephus had maintained that they were fulfilled in his father Vespasian, who was raised to the empire in that part of the world, probably continued to give some alarm, so that the emperor was not quite easy about them. Indeed the mind of Vespasian himself had not been perfectly at rest on this subject. For after the taking of Jerusalem, he ordered that inquiry should be made concerning the descendants of David, that he might exterminate all who were of that royal line†. Domitian, hearing that some relations of Jesus were living, gave orders that they should be executed, and two grandsons of the apostle Judas who is called the brother of Jesus, being sent to him, he inquired of them, whether they were of the family of David. When

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they,

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 17. p. 108.

† Ibid. Lib. iii. Cap. 12. p. 106.

they acknowledged that they were, he inquired concerning their estates and property, to which they replied that they were together possessed of a thousand denarii, not in money, but in land, consisting of thirty-nine acres ( $\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\varsigma\pi\alpha$ ), out of which, by their own labour, they maintained themselves, and paid the taxes; and they shewed their hands callous with labour.

The emperor then inquired of them concerning Christ and his kingdom, when and where it would be set up. To this they replied that his kingdom was not an earthly one, but angelic, and heavenly, to commence at the end of time, when he would come in glory, to judge the living and the dead; and to give to every one according to his works. With these answers Domitian was so well satisfied, that, thinking he had nothing to fear from men who made so wretched an appearance, he not only dismissed them, but also put a stop to the persecution; and it was not resumed till the time of Trajan\*.

In this persecution the apostle John was banished to the isle of Patmos, in the *Ægean* sea, and there he had the vision which is recorded in the book of Revelation. Also Flavia Domitilla the niece of Flavius Clemens, who was then consul, together with many others was sent to the isle  
of



of Pontia\*. And it is probable from Tertullian, and Orofius, that though Domitian himself might not proceed to any great extremities in the persecution of the christians, advantage was taken of it in several parts of the empire, by those governors of provinces who were not their friends, to exercise greater severities, such as had been inflicted in the time of Nero. For, according to the superstition of the times, the christians, who taught a new religion, the object of which was the extirpation of the old ones, were thought to be the cause of all public calamities. If the Tiber flowed higher than usual, or the Nile not so high; if there was any alarming appearance in the heavens; if there happened to be an earthquake, pestilence, or famine, the common people were enraged, and were clamorous to have the christians sacrificed, and thrown to the lions in the public games†.

On the cessation of this persecution, the apostle John returned to Ephesus, and visited the churches in that province and the neighbouring ones. It is said that, though, on account of his great age, he was not able to preach, he would always attend the place of public worship, and frequently say, "My little children love one another‡."

Domitian

\* Ibid. Lib. iii. Cap. 18. p. 109.

† Orof. Lib. vii. Cap. 10. p. 483. Tert. Apol. Cap. xl. p. 32.

‡ Jer. in Epist. ad Gal. Cap. 6. Opera Vol. vi. p. 158.

Domitian was succeeded by Nerva, a man of an excellent disposition, the reverse of his predecessor, in his behaviour to the christians, as well as in other respects. According to Dio Cassius\*, he forbade the persecution of any persons either for Judaism, or for *impiety*; by which is to be understood christianity, being so called by the heathens on account of its being hostile to their worship; and because christians, having no temples, altars, or sacrifices, were commonly said to be without religion.

The apostle John is said to have died in the reign of Nerva, or Trajan, having survived the persecution of Domitian, but how long is uncertain. According to Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus†, he died and was buried at Ephesus.

Though Nero and Domitian, the first of the Roman emperors who persecuted the christians, were bad men in other respects, we must not conclude that all persecutors have been persons of this character. Others thought it their duty to act this part. Thus Trajan, who succeeded Nerva, being intent upon restoring the empire, and extending the bounds of it, and being withal very superstitious, imagined, as the heathens in general did, that this end could not be gained without the re-establishment of the ancient religion, under which

\* In Xiphilin, p. 126.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 31. p. 125.

which the Roman empire had been formed and flourished ; and christianity had by this time gained so much ground, that the festivals, and sacrifices, of the heathen worship began to be much neglected, especially in Asia Minor, and the eastern provinces of the empire ; so as to become the subject of great and general complaint. In consequence of this, Trajan procured from the senate an order to restore the antient religion. On the same principle also Marcus Antoninus was a more unrelenting persecutor of the christians than Trajan had been.

The younger Pliny, the particular favourite of Trajan, and governor of Bythinia, was one, among others, who carried the orders of the emperor and of the senate into execution. But so great was the number of persons whose lives were forfeited by this edict, that he was at a loss how to proceed, and therefore applied to the emperor for further instructions. The letter which he wrote on this occasion is extant, and is highly favourable to the christians of that age, as the writer acknowledges that they could not be proved to be guilty of any immorality, or of obstinacy, except in adhering to their religion, and chusing to die rather than abandon it. It also contains a most authentic evidence of the great spread of christianity, in that early period, when the facts on which it is grounded were recent.

“ Suspending,”

“Suspending,” says he, “all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice. Forasmuch as has appeared to me a matter highly deserving of consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering. Many of all ages, and every rank, of both sexes also, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized the cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless, it seems to me, that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that temples, which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented, and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims likewise are every where bought up, whereas for some time there were few purchasers; whence it is easy to imagine what numbers of persons might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to those who should repent\*.”

So thought this governor, who was probably intirely unacquainted with the principles of christianity, and with the nature and strength of its evidence; and who, like many other men in power, and even men of letters, at that time, thought it beneath them to make any serious inquiry on the subject. Others who did so were satisfied that it was founded in truth. Pliny says that among the christians were persons of all ranks. Some of them, therefore,

\* Epist. 97. Lib. x.

therefore, it may be presumed, were as respectable as himself.

The emperor, in his answer, approved of the conduct of Pliny, and being probably struck with the number of christians, he ordered that they should not be sought out; but, persisting in his measures, he ordered that, if any were regularly convicted of being christians, and did not retract, by performing some act of worship to the gods, they should be punished\*. This was a regulation of the persecution, and by no means a suppression of it; though, if the governors of provinces were disposed to favour the christians, it would be now more in their power to screen them. But great outrages might still be committed by the populace, which Eusebius says was the case at this time†; and where the governors were hostile to the christians, they would be little better for the edict.

One of the martyrs of principal note in this persecution was Symeon, the son of Cleopas, the bishop of Jerusalem, who succeeded the apostle James. He is said by Hegesippus to have been accused by some heretics, and to have borne various kinds of torture many successive days, to the admiration of Atticus his judge, and the officers who applied the torture, especially as he was said to have been an hundred and twenty years old.

As

\* Epist. 98. Lib. x.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 32. p. 126.

As he survived the different modes of torture, this venerable old man was at length crucified\*.

But the most distinguished martyr in this persecution, of whom we have any particular account, was Ignatius, the second bishop of Antioch. Being brought before the emperor himself, when he was on his expedition against the Parthians, he was by him sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts at Rome; and this he heard not only without dismay, but with seeming satisfaction. Being conducted at leisure through Asia Minor, he earnestly exhorted the christians to whom he had access to persevere in the profession of christianity, and also to be upon their guard against the principles of the Gnostics, which, as we shall presently see, began about that time to prevail more than they had done before; and as the Gnostics separated themselves from the communion of the catholic church, he most earnestly besought all christians to adhere to their regular bishops and clergy. Having liberty to write, he expressed his sentiments in several letters, addressed to particular churches, which with many interpolations, are still extant. In these letters he often speaks of his approaching death, not only without terror, but with joy†.

S E C.

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 32. p. 127.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 36. p. 132.

SECTION II.

*From the Death of Trajan, A. D. 117, to that of  
Adrian, A. D. 138.*

**T**HE reign of Trajan, which was nearly twenty-one years, and especially the early part of it, was unfavourable to christianity, as far as persecution can be said to make it so. That of Adrian, which followed, and continued twenty-one years, was favourable to it, though no law against the christians was properly repealed. But this emperor restrained the malice of the licentious populace, who were often so clamorous for the execution of christians, especially for their being thrown to the wild beasts (a barbarous entertainment of which the bulk of the people of that time were extravagantly fond) that the governors of provinces were often obliged to give way to their importunity. Indeed, on several occasions, the mere clamour of the mob induced the emperors themselves to do many things which were both contrary to law, and what they themselves much disliked.

Besides the bigoted attachment of the common people to the religious rites of their ancestors, which often consisted of scenes of riot and intem-

perance, to which the rabble in all countries are much addicted, many absurd and shocking calumnies were in those early times propagated against the christians ; and to these the common people, and many of the better sort also, were too ready to give credit. Of this kind Eusebius mentions the promiscuous commerce of the sexes, even with their nearest relations, and their feeding on execrable food, which other writers explain of their feasting upon young children, and drinking their blood\*. These reports, according to Eusebius, arose from the practices of the Gnostics ; but it is probable that they were no more true of them than they were of the catholics.

In this state of things two christian writers had the courage to present apologies to the emperor for their religion. The first was that of Quadratus bishop of Athens, in which he did not content himself with asserting the innocence of the christian tenets and rites, but urged the sure grounds of the christian faith ; asserting that the miracles of Christ were even then to be seen, in the cure of diseases and the raising of the dead ; some of the persons in whose favour these miracles were wrought being then living†. As this was not much more than eighty years after the death of Christ, and but a few years after the death of the apostle John (and the miracles

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 7. p. 149.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 3, p. 142.



miracles of the apostles might with sufficient propriety be called the miracles of Christ, since they were equally proofs of his divine mission with the miracles performed by himself) what this writer asserted is by no means improbable ; and, in his critical circumstances he would hardly have ventured to allege a fact which could not have been satisfactorily ascertained. Another apology was presented to Adrian by Aristides, who had professed philosophy at Athens ; and this, as well as that of Quadratus, was extant in the time of Eusebius.

It appears also that, after the example of Pliny S. Granius, a proconsul in Asia Minor, had represented the unhappy situation of the christians in his province, and especially the outrages which they had suffered from the mob. For the edict of the emperor sent to his successor Minutius Fundanus, directs him not to suffer those things ; and though he does not repeal the laws against the christians, he orders that the penalties should not exceed the nature of the offence, and moreover, that malicious accusers should not escape punishment.

That Adrian had no particular hatred against the christians, appears from a satirical, but facetious, letter of his to Severianus, the husband of his sister Paulina, preserved in Vopiscus, in which, speaking of the visit he had made to Egypt, and ridiculing the fickleness of the people in it, he  
mentions

mentions the variety of religions in the country, and says, that every person, coming there, even the patriarch, would by some be required to worship Serapis, and by others Christ; but that all were busy and addicted to gain. "This deity," he says, "the christians, this the Jews, this all the Gentile people worship." From this letter it is evident that the christians in Egypt were not few in number, nor timid, but bore a considerable proportion to the Jews, and even to the heathens, and that they were very assiduous in making proselytes.

By this edict of the emperor, and his known disposition towards them, the christians could not but have been greatly benefited, and it is evident that christianity gained much ground in this reign. Many persons of learning and inquiry joined them, and the calumnies which had been raised against them vanished very fast. Eusebius, speaking of the great number of Gnostics in this period, says\*, that they were greatly eclipsed by the catholics, who received fresh additions to their number every day, and that the sanctity of their manners struck with respect not only the Greeks, but the Barbarians also. He adds, that the calumnies by which they had suffered were then so fully refuted, that from that time to his own no person had ventured to defame them. This, however, could only be the case in general. For certainly, by some, reports

to

to the disadvantage of christianity were believed, and propagated, long after this time.

That there was no great persecution of christians in the time of Adrian, may with great probability be inferred from there being no account of any particular and distinguished martyrs in the whole course of it. In all persecutions, indeed, the names of but few of the sufferers are preserved, those only being noticed by writers in whose character, or case, there was something extraordinary, so as to excite particular attention. Still, however, when *no* names are mentioned, we may presume, that, compared at least with the times preceding and following it, there was no great cause of complaint.

The christians were so well known in this age, that there was no danger of confounding them with the jews, as was the case when they first appeared ; and as the affairs of the christians flourished, the calamities of the Jewish nation increased. In the eighth year of Trajan, the Jews of Egypt and Cyrenaica revolted, and at first had some advantage against the Greeks ; but these taking refuge in Alexandria, slew the Jews who resided there ; and those of Cyrene, wanting their assistance, were not able to carry on a regular war, and therefore contented themselves with plundering the country, being commanded by one Lucua, called by Eubius, their king. At length the emperor, sending against them Marcius Turbo, with a sufficient force

force by land and sea, after many engagements, and in a long course of time, destroyed great numbers of them, so as to put an entire end to their ravages\*. The emperor, fearing lest the Jews in Mesopotamia should molest the other inhabitants, ordered L. Quietus to expel them from that province. Accordingly in a pitched battle he defeated a great number of them, and on account of this victory he was made governor of Judea.

But what the Jews suffered under Trajan, was little when compared with the calamities which befel them in the following reign of Adrian. Having revolted under Barchocab, who had been nothing better than a leader of banditti, but who had flattered them with a prospect of some great deliverance (probably giving out that he was the messiah) they were subdued by Rufus the governor, who made use of his advantage to exercise the most shocking cruelties; killing an infinite number of men, together with their wives and children. At length, in the eighth year of Adrian, when the whole war was reduced to the siege of Betthera, a fortified place not far from Jerusalem, the Jews within it suffered the greatest extremes of hunger and thirst, and the fortress being at length taken, Barchocab himself was put to death. Also, to prevent any future revolt of the nation, the whole race of the

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 1. p. 142.

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the Jews were forbidden to set foot in their own country, or even to see it at a distance.\*

Thus, says Eusebius, was the land of Judea emptied of its own inhabitants, and peopled by a concourse of strangers; a Roman colony being fixed at Jerusalem, which, in honour of the emperor Ælius Adrian, was called Ælia. There being no more any Jews in the place, the christian church which arose there, consisted wholly of Gentiles, and their first bishop, after those of the circumcision, bore the name of Marcus.†

After the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, many of the Jewish christians returned to the place, and kept up the form of a church till the time of Adrian. The names of the bishops are preserved in Eusebius, and they succeeded James the brother of Christ in the following order: Simeon, Justus, Zaccheus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Matthew, Philip, Simeon, Justus, Levi, Ephraim, Joseph, and Judas. Though, excepting Simeon, the first of them, we know nothing of these, besides their names, yet, as they succeeded the apostles in the ancient mother church, I thought it not amiss to give a catalogue of them.

### S E C.

\* In the war under Adrian the Jews lost 580,000 men in battle, besides those who perished by famine distress and fire, *Basnage* Vol. 7. p. 368.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 6, p. 144.

## SECTION III.

*Of the Gnostics in the Reign of Adrian.*

THE christian writers of this and the following age make grievous complaints of the increase of *Gnosticism* in the time of Adrian; and no doubt, in some respects, with reason, as it was a great corruption of the true christian principles. But this circumstance is an incontestable and valuable proof of the favourable reception of christianity by the learned and inquisitive of that age. Those who distinguished themselves as Gnostic christians were the literati and philosophers of their times; who being convinced by historical evidence of the truth of the miracles and resurrection of Christ, were led to embrace christianity; at the same time that, not being able to divest themselves of their philosophical principles, they endeavoured to retain both; and doubtless, thought they could do it very consistently; considering Christ and the apostles as sent by God to teach certain important truths, but who (either not being philosophers, or having their reasons for concealing their more sublime tenets, taught what they knew in language adapted to the vulgar.

We

We have seen the rise of this system in the times of the apostles, and the offence which it justly gave them. But notwithstanding this, and though their remonstrances might prevent the spread of this philosophical christianity for a time, other persons arose, who either were not moved by the authority of the apostles (with respect to what they might think they had no particular commission to teach) or finding means to explain what they had written, so as not to be unfavourable to their sentiments, revived the same general doctrines, perhaps with some little variation. And when, about this time, christianity made more rapid advances than ever it had done before, so as to engage the attention of all ranks and classes of men, it is not surprising that, while the greater part received it as it was plainly taught by the apostles, some persons of a speculative turn should receive it in conjunction with their philosophical tenets.

That nothing but the strongest evidence, and that of the plain historical kind, could have led these philosophers to embrace christianity, is evident from the opposition that was for some time made to it by persons of this class, as by Simon Magus and his immediate followers. It was, indeed, the union of principles which were far from having any natural connexion. The philosophers of that age, viz. those of the East, could not believe that such a world as this, abounding

with so many evils, could have been made by the Supreme Being, who is perfectly good; and they had always been used to regard with extreme dislike and contempt the ceremonies of the Jewish religion. They, therefore, thought that the world was made by inferior and imperfect beings, and that the Jewish religion had no better origin. They had always regarded *matter* with peculiar aversion, as a clog to pre-existent lapsed spirits, who longed to regain their liberty, and rise unfettered to their pristine seat in the empyreal regions. They, therefore, could not bear the idea of the resurrection of this hated body.

Yet, notwithstanding these fixed principles, without the aid of any arguments in favour of christianity derived from the Jewish scriptures, and its prophecies (of the divine origin of which they could not but know that Christ and the apostles were fully persuaded) they could not refuse their assent to the evidence of the recent facts of the gospel history. They, therefore, retained their former principles, as a sublime philosophy, which was not wholly inconsistent with the plainer christianity of the common people.

Justin Martyr, who was well acquainted with the Gnostics, and who wrote a treatise against them which is now lost, sums up the principal of their tenets in two passages, in his Dialogue with Trypho,



pho\*, in which he says, " they blasphemed the  
 " Maker of the universe, and the God of Abraham,  
 " Isaac, and Jacob ; some of them being called  
 " Marcionites, some Valentinians, some Basilidi-  
 " ans, some Saturnianians, and others going by o-  
 " ther names ; who say that there is no resurrection  
 " of the dead, but that immediately after death souls  
 " are received into Heaven. Do not," he adds,  
 " take these to be christians†."

It is remarkable, that at the same time that Jus-  
 tin makes this exclamation against the Gnostics,  
 calling their tenets impious and blasphemous, he  
 was himself uniting with the plain doctrine of  
 Christ other philosophical tenets, little less hetero-  
 geneous to it, tho' from a different school, viz,  
 that of Plato, to which he was attached. This u-  
 nion of philosophy and Platonism afterwards pro-  
 duced a system far more absurd, and more direct-  
 ly contrary to the principles of the gospel, than  
 any thing that Gnosticism could have led to, as we  
 shall see in the course of this history.

The Gnostics whom I have now described re-  
 garded with contempt the system of the Jewish re-  
 ligion. But it appears from the writings of the a-  
 postles, that many Jews, and those the most zeal-  
 ous for the rites of their religion, held Gnostic  
 principles. These must have been Jews of a spe-  
 culative turn, who with other philosophers (tho'  
 they

\* P. 308 and 311.

† Dial. p. 311.

they might not perhaps believe that the world was made by inferior beings) regarded matter, and the body, with contempt, and were no believers in a proper resurrection. The philosophical Jews held these new tenets in conjunction with their belief in the divine inspiration of Moses, just as the Gnostics in Adrian's time, who were unbelievers in the divine inspiration of Moses, held the same philosophical tenets in conjunction with their belief of the divine mission of Christ.

Of the class of Jewish Gnostics was probably Cerinthus, who is said to have opposed the apostle John; and considering the vehemence with which this apostle writes against the Gnostics, an anecdote which Irenæus says he had from Polycarp, who was acquainted with the apostles, and was by them ordained bishop of Smyrna, I do not think altogether improbable, viz. that finding himself in a public bath together with Cerinthus, he made haste to leave the place, saying, "Let us flee, lest the bath in which is Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, fall upon us\*." In this manner might this apostle chuse to express his aversion to Cerinthus and his principles. The Nicolaitans, who are mentioned with great indignation in the book of Revelation, as addicted to some practices highly censurable, were probably Gnostics of this class. †

An

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv, Cap. 14, p. 161.

† Ibid, Lib. iii Ch. 32. p. 123.

An anecdote similar to that which Irenæus from Polycarp relates concerning John is told of Polycarp himself, viz. that being met by Marcion, and asked whether he would acknowledge him, meaning as a christian, and a brother, he replied, I acknowledge thee to be the first born of Satan\*. The philosophical Marcion would probably smile at this angry reply of the venerable old bishop.

After the age of the apostles, we have no distinct account of any other eminent Gnostics of the same class with Cerinthus, who is said to have had many followers, especially in Asia Minor, though some of the sects of the Gnostics enumerated by Hegeſippus, were probably Jews. For he speaks of the church of Jerusalem as continuing a pure virgin till the time of Simeon, the last of the Jewish bishops of Jerusalem. "Till that time," he says, "it was not corrupted with absurd doctrines (an expression almost appropriated to the Gnostic notions) but first Thebuthis, because he was not made a bishop, began to corrupt it, his being one of the seven heresies. After him were the Simonians from Simon, the Cleobians from Cleobius, the Dositheans from Dositheus, the Gortheans from Gortheus, and the Masbotheans. From them came the Menandrians, the Marcionites, the Carpocratians, the Valentinians, the Basilidians, and Saturnianians, each of them preaching their  
"different

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv, Cap. 14, p. 161

"different doctrines. From them came false Christs, and false prophets, who divided the unity of the church with corrupt doctrines; against God, and against his Christ."\*

We may the less wonder at our hearing of no particular Gnostics among the Jews, as we have so few accounts of the Jewish christians themselves. But the Gnostics among the Gentile christians made a great figure at this time, under leaders of distinguished eminence, who wrote many books, which employed the learned among the Catholics of some centuries to answer. They are represented as having been the disciples of one another in regular succession, beginning with Dositheus, who is said to have been the master of Simon, as Simon was of Menander, a Samaritan, and Menander of Saturninus of Antioch, who was followed by Basilides of Alexandria. †

Cerdon who is said to have been the disciple of Simon, came to Rome in the pontificate of Hyginus, the ninth from the time of the apostles. He was succeeded by Marcion of Pontus, who had many more followers. ‡ But the person whose disciples were the most numerous was Valentinus, who also visited Rome in the time of Hyginus. He flourished

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv, Cap. 24, p. 122.

† Ibid, Lib. iv. Cap. 7, p. 147.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv, Cap. 11, p. 151.

flourished chiefly in the time of the emperor Antoninus Pius, and continued to the time of Anicetus.

In the time of Hegesippus Gnosticism (which was the only system that this writer considered as heresy) had not infected the greater churches. He came to Rome in the time of Anicetus, and on his journey conversed with many bishops, and particularly visited the church of Corinth, and found in all of them what he calls the doctrine of the apostles.\*

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#### SECTION IV.

*Of the Christian Writers in this Period.*

WITHIN this period the apostle John wrote his book of the *Revelation*, containing an account of the visions which he had in the isle of Patmos, whither he had been banished by Domitian. It was, however, long objected to by many, as not written by this apostle; and some are still averse to receive it. I shall not enter into the arguments for or against this book; but what has been

alleged

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv, Cap. 24, p. 181.

alleged in favour of its having been written by the apostle preponderates with me.

There is little doubt of the genuineness of the three epistles of John, or of their having been written near the close of his life ; one general epistle, and the two others addressed to particular persons. The principal object of them all is to guard those to whom he writes against the opinions of the Gnostics, especially the Docetæ, who held that Christ was man only in appearance, and had not real flesh and blood. He also inculcates, in a most earnest and affectionate manner, the christian duty of brotherly love, and exhorts to practical virtue in general.

The other writers within this period are very few, and of them few are extant, except such as are evidently interpolated.

The oldest work of the age, if it had been genuine, is that which goes by the name of *The epistle of Barnabas*. The design of it is the same with that of Paul to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews ; viz. to shew the superiority of the gospel to the law of Moses. Whoever was the author of this epistle, it was probably written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem. It abounds with interpretations of the Old Testament which discover much more of imagination, than of judgement.

The most valuable, and unquestionably genuine, production of this age, is an epistle to the church

church of Corinth by Clemens, bishop of Rome, the same whom Paul mentions\*, as one of his *fellow labourers, whose names were in the book of life*. This epistle was held in the highest esteem by all christians; and, like the scriptures, was publicly read in many churches. It is an earnest dissuasive from the spirit of faction, which appeared in the church of Corinth, and which was, indeed, sufficiently conspicuous when Paul wrote his epistles. There is extant another epistle ascribed to this Clemens, but it is evidently spurious, and was probably written in the middle of the third century. So highly was this Clemens esteemed by christians of a later age, that several other writings were palmed upon him, especially the *Apostolical Constitutions* and the *Clementine homilies*, of which an account will be given in their proper place.

Another work of doubtful authority is the *Shepherd of Hermas*, by some thought to be that Hermas who is mentioned by Paul in his epistle to the Romans; but by others supposed to be either spurious, or to have been written by a later Hermas, or rather Hermes, brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, about the year 140. Whoever was the author of this work (and though it was so much esteemed by many christians, as to be publicly read in their churches†) it is certainly a very poor performance.

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\* Phil. iv. 3.

† From this we may with great probability infer that, in this early age, the canonical books of the New Testa

It consists of three visions, twelve commands, and ten similitudes. The object of them all is to inculcate moral duties, but the method of doing it, by visions or revelations, which were certainly fictitious, is not to be justified. Eusebius does not determine whether this work be genuine or not<sup>o</sup>.

It is probable that the *epistles* ascribed to *Ignatius*, especially the lesser ones, are in the main genuine, and the interpolations that are in them may easily be distinguished. They were written, as was mentioned before, on his journey to Rome, to encourage christians in a state of persecution, and to warn them against the principles of the Gnostics.

We have a *letter of Polycarp*, bishop of Smyrnia, to the Philippians, written to enforce the practice of moral duties, and to dissuade from the principles of the Gnostics. An account of the martyrdom of this excellent man will be given in the next period.

In the time of Eusebius there were extant *five books of Papias*, *bishop of Hierapolis* in Syria, a hearer  
ment were not thought by christians to be written by a proper inspiration. For they certainly did not consider the epistle of Clemens, or the visions of Hermas, as so written; and since the idea of the books of scripture being inspired has prevailed, it has been thought improper to put any other writings so much upon a level with them, or read them alike in the time of public worship.

Lib. iii. Cap. 3. p. 90.



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a hearer of the apostle John, and a companion of Polycarp, *of the interpretation of the divine oracles.* Papias was a great collector of the sayings of the apostles; and one of the traditions preserved by him was that, after the resurrection, Christ would reign upon earth a thousand years, an opinion which, from his authority, was long respected by many\*.

The Apologies of Quadratus and Aristides addressed to Adrian were mentioned before.

Among the christian writers in the time of Adrian, Eusebius mentions Hegesippus, and also Justin; but as the Apology of the latter was addressed to Antoninus Pius, I shall speak of them both hereafter.

To this account of christian writers, it may be proper to add that of two Jewish authors, as their works are of particular importance to christians, viz. Philo and Josephus.

Philo was a native of Alexandria, brother to the chief magistrate among the Jews in that place, and he was sent at the head of the embassy to Caligula, as has been mentioned. His writings, which are numerous, shew that he was much attached to the Platonic philosophy; and he made a very absurd use of it in interpreting the scriptures of the Old Testament, which is the object of most of his works. In fact, he represents the writings of Moses as a kind of allegory, the true meaning of which is to be found

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iii. Cap. 39. p. 135.

found in the principles of Plato; though we are not to suppose that he therefore considered the Mo-  
saic history as a fable, destitute of historical truth. In this mode of interpreting scripture Philo was unhappily followed by Origen, and other learned christians, for which they are justly ridiculed by Porphyry, as Philo was by Celsus. From Philo it was that the platonizing christian Fathers learned the personification of the divine logos; so that, without being a christian, he may be considered as having laid the foundation of the doctrine of the trinity.

Josephus is a writer of much greater value, as his principal work is a history of the Jewish nation from the beginning, and contains a particular account of the later periods of it, and of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other calamities which betel the nation, of which he was an eye witness; having had the command of an army, and having been taken prisoner and treated with great kindness by Vespasian and Titus. His history bears marks of a desire to recommend himself to the Greeks and Romans; but this appeared more particularly by his maintaining that Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperor in the East, was the Messiah of the ancient prophets. He carefully omits all mention of Christ, or of christians. This, as he could not but have been acquainted with them, probably arois from his not being able to say any ill, and his not  
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chusing to say any good, of them, and shews that he had imbibed the general prejudices of his nation against them. On this account, however, his history, which shews the exact accomplishment of our Saviour's predictions concerning the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple, is of the more value to Christians.

Besides his twenty books of Jewish Antiquities, and seven of the Jewish war, we have of Josephus a panegyric on the Maccabees, his own life, and two books against Apion, in defence of his nation and religion. He spent the latter part of his life at Rome.

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Thus we are come to a conclusion of what may be called the virgin, or pure age of the church, in which we perceive no trace of any doctrine or practice (excepting those of the Gnostics, who in this period were in a great measure separated from the catholic church) besides those which were derived from the apostles themselves. None of the writers I have mentioned so much as allude, in the most distant manner, to any heresy but that of the Gnostics, which was christianity contaminated with the principles of the oriental philosophy. In the whole of this period the sole object of worship, in all christian churches, was no other than the  
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one true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Christ himself was by all considered as the most distinguished of the prophets, who had no existence before the time of his birth in Judea. The memory of what had been uniformly taught by the apostles was as yet too recent for any departure from such a fundamental doctrine as that of the unity of God.

In the following period we shall have a very different scene opening upon us. It could then no longer be said, as hitherto it might be, that there were few men of learning among christians. Philosophers, as well as other persons, gave attention to evidences of christianity, and became converts; so that in a short time the number of writers among the heathens bore a small proportion to those among the christians. But the credit which christianity derived from this flattering circumstance was in a great measure counter-balanced by the foreign opinions which these philosophers brought into christianity, and connected with it; since by this means a foundation was laid for a system of christian idolatry, little better than that of the heathens, and for various other abuses and corruptions, through which it was barely possible to discern the features of primitive christianity.

PERIOD III.

FROM THE DEATH OF ADRIAN, A. D. 138, TO  
THAT OF MARCUS AURELIUS, A. D. 180.

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SECTION I.

*Of the State of Christianity in the Reign of Antoninus Pius, and of the Martyrdom of Polycarp and Justin, in the Reign of Marcus Aurelius.*

**A**NTONINUS Pius, who succeeded Adrian, and reigned twenty-three years, was one of the best of emperors, and was distinguished for his justice and humanity. He was far from persecuting the christians, though they were persecuted in his reign, especially in the beginning of it, by some governors of provinces, who either took advantage of the laws which were not repealed, or gave way to the clamours of the populace. For, as there had been some earthquakes in Asia, and the neighbouring countries, the superstitious heathens, ignorant of their true cause, ascribed them to  
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the anger of the gods, for the desertion of their worship, in consequence of the spread of christianity ; and on this account they were guilty of great outrages upon the christians. Of these they complained, and Justin Martyr presented to Antoninus an apology, which is still extant, and appears to have been well received. For the emperor issued an edict in favour of christians, the authenticity of which is vindicated by Dr. Lardner\*.

There is so much good sense in this edict, and it discovers so much knowledge of the principles and conduct of the christians, in this emperor, that I shall give it entire in the doctor's translation from Eusebius†.

“ The emperor Antoninus, Augustus, Armenianus, Pontifex Maximus, &c. to the states of  
 “ Asia sendeth greeting. I am well satisfied the  
 “ gods will not suffer such men to be concealed :  
 “ for undoubtedly they are more concerned to  
 “ punish those who refuse to worship them than  
 “ you are. But you only confirm these men in  
 “ their sentiments, and make them more obstinate,  
 “ by calling them impious, and giving them vexa-  
 “ tion. For they are not so desirous to live, as to  
 “ be prosecuted, and suffer death for their God.  
 “ Hence they come off victorious, laying down  
 “ their lives rather than do what you demand of  
 “ them

\* *Heathen Testimonies*, Vol. ii. p. 155.

† *Lib. iv. Cap. 13. p. 159.*

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“them. As for the earthquakes of the former or  
 “the present times, it may not be improper to ad-  
 “vise you to compare yourselves with them, and  
 “your sentiments with theirs. For when such  
 “things happen, you are dejected, but they are  
 “full of confidence in God; and you, in the igno-  
 “rance you are in, neglect the other gods, and their  
 “rites, and the worship of the immortal likewise;  
 “and the christians who worship him you banish,  
 “and persecute to death. Before our time many  
 “governors of provinces wrote to our deified father  
 “about these men, to whom he wrote, that they  
 “should not be molested, unless they did things  
 “contrary to the welfare of the Roman govern-  
 “ment. Many also have informed me about the  
 “same men, to whom I returned an answer agreea-  
 “ble to the rescript of my father. If, therefore, any  
 “person will still accuse any of these men as such  
 “(i. e. a christian) let the accused be acquitted,  
 “though he appear to be such an one, and let the  
 “accuser be punished.—Set up at Ephesus in the  
 “common assembly of Asia.

“And that these things were so done,” adds  
 Eusebius, “is attested by Melito bishop of Sardis,  
 “who flourished at that time, in what he says in his  
 “excellent apology, which he made for our religi-  
 on to the emperor Verus\*.”

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\* Heathen Testimonies, Vol. ii. p. 156.

Such being the disposition of this excellent emperor, the persecutions arising from the violence of the common people were, no doubt, restrained; and accordingly we have no account of any particular martyrdoms till the following reign of Marcus Aurelius; who though an excellent emperor in other respects, was nevertheless a bigotted heathen. In the eighth year of his age he had been introduced into the college of the Salian priests, and could himself discharge all the functions of that priesthood. Being much attached to the study of philosophy, he honoured his teachers not only with statues, but also with sacrifices; and in the worship of the heathen gods he was so superstitious, that he was sometimes ridiculed, as Julian was afterwards for the great number of his sacrifices; and in common with the weakest of the heathens, he had great faith in omens and dreams.

In the beginning of his reign many calamities beset the empire. The Tiber overflowed, and did great damage in the city. After this followed a famine. The Parthians also declared war against the Romans, and defeated their armies. Many heathen philosophers, being by him invited to Rome, and supported by him, advised him to maintain the religion of his ancestors, no doubt, as a necessary means of preserving the empire, and providing for the stability of it. To this he had no aversion, and being a Stoic, and thinking it right



## §14. I. CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 241

right to be inflexible in his measures, he issued rigorous edicts against the christians, which were obeyed with sufficient alacrity by the governors of provinces.

He does not appear to have been at all moved by some excellent apologies, which were presented to him by christian writers, or by those which had been presented to Adrian and Antoninus Pius; and yet he must have been well acquainted with christians, and the principles on which they acted. The fortitude of christians, in bearing persecution he mentions in his own writings, but ascribes it to *obstinacy*; and this he, with Pliny the younger, and many others, thought to be a sufficient cause of punishment. Had the heathens borne torture and death with the same fortitude, he would, no doubt, have highly commended them; but he was provoked at the superiority which the christians shewed to all other men in similar circumstances.

The apologies for christians, which were presented to this emperor though all without effect, were those of Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Melito of Sardis, and Theophilus of Antioch; and towards the end of his reign, appeared that of Miltiades. Some passages in these apologies I shall recite from the translations of Dr. Lardner, as they shew the situation of christians in those times, and how they were affected by it.

Justin,

Justin, after mentioning Ptolemy, and two others who were put to death by the order of Urbicus, prefect of the city, and who speaks as if the persecution was general, says, " Things that have happened very lately, but a few days ago, in your city, and which are every where done in like manner by the presidents without reason, have compelled me to make this address to you." In the course of it, he says, " Every where, if any Gentile was admonished, or reproved for a fault, by a father, a neighbour, a child, a friend, a brother a husband, or a wife, he would presently have his reprover before a governor, who would be willing to inflict death upon him\*."

Athenagoras, who was probably an Athenian, tells this emperor and Commodus (for his apology was presented at the close of his reign, which shews that he had not relaxed of his severity in the course of it) that all other people experienced the benefits of their equitable government; " but we Christians," say he, " because no regard is had to us, nor any provision made for us, though we do no evil, and are in all things obedient to the Divine Being, and your government, are harrassed and persecuted, for the name only. We therefore intreat you to take care of us, that we may no longer be put to death by sycophants."

Melito, in a fragment of his apology preserved by

\* Heathen Testimonies, Vol. ii. p. 184.

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by Eusebius, says. " Pious men are now persecuted and harassed throughout all Asia by new decrees, which was never done before ; and impudent sycophants, and such as covet the possessions of others, taking occasion from the edicts, rob without fear or shame, and cease not to plunder those who have offended in nothing." Afterwards, " If these things are done by your order, let them be thought to be well done ; for it is not reasonable to believe that a just emperor should ever decree what is unjust, and we shall cheerfully bear the reward of such a death, This request, however, we make to you, that you will inform yourself concerning those who are engaged in this contention [i. e. the christians] and then judge whether they deserve death and punishment, or safety and quiet. But if this resolution, and new edict, which is not fit to be enacted against barbarians and enemies, proceeds not from you, as we hope, much more would we entreat you not to neglect us, and give us up to this public rapine\*."

It is pretty evident from this, that the emperor Marcus Antoninus issued new edicts against the christians, even towards the close of his reign ; and though Tertullian says that he published no new laws against the christians, Lardner observes that there might be imperial edicts published in Gaul and

\* Heathen Testimonies, Vol. ii. p. 186.

and Asia, with which he was not acquainted. Other critics are of the same opinion, and Mosheim, with great probability, supposes that by the new edicts the accusers and prosecutors of the christians were entitled to their possessions, as a recompence for their zeal against them.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned excellent apologies, M. Aurelius, with unrelenting rigour, continued the persecution of the christians to the end of his reign, which was near twenty years; so that they suffered more under him, than under all the preceding emperors. Eusebius says that, in consequence of the populace promoting the persecution, the number of martyrs was almost infinite; and that he should give a fuller account of them in a separate treatise; contenting himself with mentioning, in his general history, a few of the more remarkable cases, which I shall recite after him.

In this persecution suffered the illustrious Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who had been the companion of the apostle John; and Eusebius intimates that the persecution was violent not at Smyrna only, but in Asia in general. Of what happened in other places we are now ignorant, but of the martyrdom of Polycarp we have an authentic account, in an epistle from the christians at Smyrna to their brethren at Philadelphia and other places.

Before

Before they come to the account of Polycarp, they speak of other martyrs in general, and describe their constancy in suffering the tortures to which they were exposed; observing that the spectators were astonished to see them scourged till their veins and arteries were laid bare, and even their entrails became visible; that after this they were laid upon the shells of sea fishes, and sharp spikes fixed in the ground, and exposed to other kinds of torture, and at last were thrown to the wild beasts to be devoured. One Germanicus, being young, was advised by the president to spare himself; but he was not moved by it, and being exposed to the wild beasts, rather stimulated them to dispatch him the sooner.

After this the whole multitude cried out for Polycarp to be produced. He, hearing of this was not disturbed, and had no intention of flying, but was prevailed upon by his friends to retire to a country house not far off. Here, three days before his apprehension, he dreamed that his pillow was in flames, which led him to say that he should die by fire. Being pursued, he fled to another place; but being traced thither, he refused going any farther saying, *the will of the Lord be done*; and going to those who were sent to apprehend him, he talked cheerfully with them, and ordered meat to be set before them, requesting that they would permit him to pray undisturbed for a single hour.

After

After his prayer he was conducted to the city, and on the way Herod the Irenarch, and his father Nicetas took him into their chariot, with a view to persuade him to sacrifice; but on his refusal, they thrust him rudely out of it, so that his leg was bruised. Recovering himself, he proceeded to the stadium with great cheerfulness, and being brought before the proconsul, and urged by him to revile Christ, he answered, "Fourscore and six years have I served him, and he has never done me any injury; how can I blaspheme my king and my Saviour?" Being threatened to be thrown to the wild beasts, and appearing indifferent to it, he was then threatened with fire, to which he answered, "You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and then is extinguished; but you are ignorant of the fire of the future judgment, and everlasting punishment, reserved for the wicked; but why do you delay, appoint which you please."

Proclamation then being made that Polycarp had persisted in professing himself a christian, many Jews and heathens of the city demanded that a lion should be let loose upon him; but Philip the Afiarch saying that this was impossible, as the exhibition of wild beasts was over, they cried with one voice that he should be burned alive, and all joined in bringing dry wood, the Jews eagerly assisting, according to their custom.

When

When the pile was made ready, Polycarp undressed himself, and endeavoured to pull off his shoes, which, on account of his great age, he had not for a long time been able to do; and when they were about to nail him to the stake, he said, "Let me be as I am. He that enables me to bear the fire, will also enable me to remain unmoved within the pile, without your fastening me with nails." They, therefore, only bound him, and after permitting him to pray, when he had concluded (saying aloud, *Amen*) fire was put to the pile; but as he did not die so soon as they expected, at the request of the people, he was dispatched with a sword. The flesh being consumed, the christians gathered his bones, and deposited them in a proper place, the Jews having been particularly urgent that his body should not be given to the christians to be interred. They conclude with saying, that if they were permitted, they should celebrate the day of his death upon the place, as his birth-day, in commemoration of so glorious a contest, and for the instruction of posterity.

The authors of this epistle gave an account of twelve other martyrs, and among them of one Metrodorus a presbyter among the Marcionites, who was burned alive, and especially of one Pionius, distinguished for his bold confession, his exhortation to others, and his constancy in the fire. Eusebius concludes this chapter of his work with men-

tioning several who suffered martyrdom at Pergamus, as Carpus, Papulus, and a woman of the name of Agathonica.

It was under Marcus Aurelius that Justin, the author of the Apology mentioned above, suffered martyrdom, and thence acquired the title of *Martyr*, to distinguish him from other persons of the name of Justin. He was originally of Samaria, and had applied himself to the study of philosophy, especially that of Plato, of which he always continued to be a great admirer; but according to his own account, he was converted to christianity in a private conference with some venerable old man. In a second Apology written by him, and addressed to Marcus Antoninus, he said, he expected that snates would be laid for him by one Crescens, a Cynic philosopher, with whom he had had some dispute; and this appears to have really happened. For at the accusation of this Crescens he was condemned to death, in the sixth year of this emperor, A. D. 166; and it is thought that he was beheaded by the order of Rusticus, the prefect of Rome\*.

According to Justin, this Crescens, though by profession a philosopher, was a very immoral man, and such in general were the persecutors of the christians. Justin himself gives us an account of a martyrdom, which shews the innocence of the accused, and the malice of the accuser. There was a

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 16. p. 174.



man and his wife, who had both of them lived very dissolute lives, till the woman, becoming a christian, reformed her conduct, and endeavoured to reclaim her husband; but her expostulations having no effect, after bearing with him a long time, she got herself divorced from him. In revenge he accused her of being a christian, but probably not being able to get her condemned, he next accused one Ptolemy, by whom she had been converted. Ptolemy, being asked whether he was a christian, immediately acknowledged it, and in consequence was ordered for execution. One Lucius, seeing this, expostulated with the judge, whose name was Urbicus, for condemning a man who was guilty of no crime, or immorality. On this the judge asked him if he was a christian also, and he answering that he was, he was immediately ordered for execution likewise; as also were three others, who presented themselves in the same manner. So little dread, adds our historian, had the christians of death, that many of them rejoiced in the prospect of it\*.

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 17. p. 177.

## SECTION II.

*Of the Christian Martyrs at Lyons and Vienne in Gaul.*

THE most shocking scene of barbarous persecution in this or any other reign, was exhibited at Lyons and Vienne, in Gaul, which is given by Eusebius as a specimen of what was transacted in other places, from an authentic account written by the remaining christians of the places to the churches of Asia and Phrygia ; and to give some idea of the savage rage with which this persecution was carried on, not only with the connivance, but with the knowledge and approbation, of this philosophical emperor, I shall give a pretty large abridgment of this account.

The persecution began with excluding the christians from the baths, the markets, and all places of public concourse. Then the populace insulted them in the most outrageous manner, dragging them about, plundering their goods, and thereby obliging them to keep within their houses. After this, being regularly accused before the magistrates, they were, on their confessing themselves to be christians, sent to the prisons till the arrival of a president

dent of the provience. Being brought before him, Vettius Epigathus desired to be heard in their behalf; but acknowledging himself to be a christian, he was not permitted, but was confined with the rest; and many others joined in an open profession of their faith, though about ten persons were staggered with the prospect of what they had to suffer, and renounced their religion; a circumstance which gave the rest more concern than the idea of what was prepared for themselves. More, however, were soon added to the number of the confessors, and those the most eminent christians in the place.

Strict orders having been given to make inquiry into the lives and conduct of the christians, some apostates were prevailed upon to accuse them of incest, feeding upon human flesh, and such other abominations as public rumour had laid to their charge. After this the rage of the people, even of those who before had not been so ill disposed towards them, was raised to the highest pitch.

They then proceeded to torture those who had been apprehended, in order to make them confess the truth of what was laid to their charge, and especially Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne, Maturus, a young convert, Attalus, a native of Pergamus, but a great pillar of the christian cause in Gaul, and Blandina, a slave. For her many persons, and especially her mistress, were in great pain, lest the  
torture

torture should be too much for her. But she bore it, in a great variety of forms, from morning to evening, to the astonishment of those who applied it; and it was observed, that she seemed to relieve herself from her agony by every now and then repeating that she was a christian, and that the christians were innocent people.

To all the questions that were put to Sanctus, in order to prove the vile charges against himself and his brethren, he answered nothing but that he was a christian. This provoked the executioners so much, that they applied red hot plates of iron to the tenderest parts of his body, till he was all one wound, and had hardly the appearance of the human form. Having left him a few days in this condition, they hoped that while he was sore, they should make him more exquisitely sensible to fresh tortures. But these, being applied to him while he was dreadfully swelled, were observed to have the effect of reducing him to his former shape, and restoring him to the use of his limbs.

At this time one Biblias, who had renounced the faith, being produced, in order to repeat the calumnies with which she had been induced to charge the christians, was filled with remorse, and openly retracted what she had alleged; saying, how could the christians eat infants, or drink their blood, when they did not even eat the blood of  
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brute animals.\* In consequence of this, she was added to the number of the martyrs.

This mode of torture not succeeding, many were shut up in noisome dungeons, in which they were also tortured in their feet and many other ways, and many died of suffocation ; but others lived in this dreadful situation, and comforted such as were brought to them. Those who expired in this confinement were chiefly the young and the tender, who had not been accustomed to bear any hardships.

At length Pothinus, the bishop of Lions, who was then more than ninety years old, and very infirm, was brought before the tribunal ; and on his confession, without any regard to his age, or weakness, he was insulted in the most outrageous manner by the mob, who beat him with their fists, kicked him with their feet, and threw at him whatever came to hand, as if they were avenging the cause of their gods upon him.

Ten persons, it was observed, had shrunk from the trial, and denied that they were christians. These, not being credited, were not allowed to have the benefit of their recantation, and being rather insulted for their cowardice, were brought to punishment along with the rest, as murderers, tho' not

\* It is evident from this circumstance, that the christians in that age thought themselves bound by the decree of the apostles at Jerusalem not to eat blood.

not as christians, on the evidence which had been produced of their eating human flesh. These went along with countenances full of shame and dejection, while the rest appeared chearful and full of courage ; so that the difference between them was easily perceived by all the by-standers. After this no christian who was apprehended renounced his profession, but persevered in it to the last.

The populace having been clamorous to have the christians thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, that favourite spectacle was at length provided for them on this occasion, and Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were brought out for this purpose. But before the production of the wild beasts, Maturus, and Sanctus were made to suffer the torture in the amphitheatre, as if it had not been applied before : and every thing that an enraged multitude called for having been tried upon them, they were at length roasted in an iron chair, till they yielded an offensive smell of burnt flesh. Nothing, however, could by this means be got from Sanctus, besides his former confession, that he was a christian; and at length an end was put to his sufferings by death.

Blandina was then produced, and when she was fastened to a stake, a wild beast was let loose upon her ; but this also she bore with the greatest composure, and by her prayers encouraged others to bear whatever might be prepared for them ; and

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as the wild beast did not meddle with her, she was remanded back to prison.

Then Attalus was loudly called for, and accordingly he was led round the amphitheatre with a board held before him, on which was inscribed, **THIS IS ATTALUS THE CHRISTIAN.** But it appearing that he was a Roman citizen, the president remanded him to prison, in expectation of an answer from the emperor concerning him and others who were in the same predicament. In this respite they so encouraged others, who had before declined this glorious combat, as it was justly called, that great numbers voluntarily declared themselves christians.

The answer of the emperor was, that they who confessed they were christians should be put to death ; but that those who denied it should be set at liberty. Upon this there was another assembly held, attended by a vast concourse of people, before whom the confessors were produced ; when those of them who were Roman citizens were beheaded, and the rest were thrown to the wild beasts. But, to the astonishment of all present, many who had before renounced their christianity, and were now produced in order to be set at liberty, revoked their recantation, and declaring themselves christians, suffered with the rest. These had been greatly encouraged so to do by Alexander a Phrygi-

an, who had shewn himself particularly anxious for the perseverance of his brethren.

At this the multitude was greatly enraged; and then, being called before the tribunal, and confessing himself to be a christian, he was sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts; and the day following was produced in the amphitheatre for that purpose, together with Attalus, whom the people had insisted upon being brought out once more. But previous to their exposure to the wild beasts, they were both made to bear a variety of tortures, and were at length run through with a sword. During all this Alexander said nothing, but shewed the greatest firmness; but Attalus, when he was in the iron chair, said, in allusion to the christians being charged with murdering and eating of infants, "This, which is your own practice, is to devour men; we neither eat men, nor are we guilty of any wickedness." It should seem that the privilege of a Roman citizen, viz. that of being beheaded without torture, was not granted to Attalus.

On the last day of the shew, Blandina was produced again, together with a young man of the name of Ponticus, about fifteen years of age, who had been every day brought to see the sufferings of others. This youth being called upon to acknowledge the heathen gods, and refusing to do it, the multitude had no compassion for either of them,  
but



but made them go through the whole circle of tortures, till Ponticus expired in them ; and Blandina, after being scourged and placed in the hot iron chair, was put into a net, and exposed to a bull ; and after being tossed by him some time, she was at length dispatched with a sword. The spectators acknowledged that they had never known any woman bear torture as she had done.

When this scene was over, the multitude continued to shew their rage by abusing the dead bodies of the christians. Those who had been suffocated in prison were thrown to the dogs, and were watched day and night lest any person should bury them. The same was done with the bodies that were left unconsumed by fire, that had been mangled or burned, with the single heads of some, and the trunks of others. Even in this condition the heathens insulted them, asking them where was their God, and what their religion had done for them. These bodies and limbs, having been exposed in this manner for six days, were burned, and being reduced to ashes, were thrown into the river, to disappoint them, as they thought, of the hope of a resurrection. From what was done in this place, says Eusebius, we may judge of what was transacted in others.

What adds to the praise of these *martyrs* is, that, whereas that title was esteemed a mark of the highest honour, they would not, in the midst  
of

of their tortures be called by that name, saying that it belonged to Christ only, or to others who had died before them. They said that they were only *confessors*, and entreated the prayers of their brethren, that they might be able to hold out to the end. They also prayed for their tormentors, and did not exult over those who fell.\* This happened in the second year of Marcus Antoninus, A. D. 167.

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### SECTION III.

#### *Of Montanism.*

IN the nineteenth year of Antoninus Pius, A. D. 156, appeared the sect of Montanus. He was a native of Ardaba, a village in Mysia, on the borders of Phrygia, on which account it is sometimes called the Phrygian or Cataphrygian heresy†. The followers of Montanus soon became heretics in the original sense of the word. For being excommunicated by other churches, they had separate assemblies of their own, but they held no opinions on any subjects of much importance, different from those of other christians. They only  
used

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v, Cap. 1, p. 198

† Ibid. Lib. v. Cap. 16. p. 229.

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used greater austerity of manners, observing various rules of fasting, highly commending celibacy, condemning all second marriages, &c. What they are most to be censured for is their pretending to the gift of prophecy, in the same sense in which the apostles were possessed of it, and to have that spirit which our Saviour called the *paraclete* or *advocate*, and which he promised to send after his ascension. The Montanists maintained that this prophecy was properly fulfilled in them; the christian church not having been able, before this time, to bear so rigorous a discipline as they were appointed to introduce into it.

Instead of delivering themselves, like Christ and the apostles, in connected and calm discourses, Montanus and his followers were thrown into violent convulsions; and in this state uttered things which their hearers supposed to be from inspiration. But while their admirers thought it to proceed from a good spirit, others attributed it to a bad one\*.

The idea of the peculiar excellence of austerity and mortification did not begin with the Montanists. For in this they only followed Tatian, whose disciples, from this circumstance, obtained the appellation of *Encratites*, voluntarily abstaining from whatever was thought unnecessarily to gratify the corporeal appetites, such as flesh meat, and wine,

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v. Cap. 16. p. 239.

wine, even in the celebration of the eucharist, and objecting also to marriage. These notions Tatian probably got from the Valentinian Gnostics, to whose doctrine he was in some measure addicted; and all the Gnostics professed to hold in contempt every thing of a corporeal nature. Tatian was succeeded by Severus, and from him the Encratites were sometimes called Severians\*.

Tatian taught his principles first in Mesopotamia, but they prevailed most in Antioch, and thence they passed into Cilicia and Pisidia; and as this was prior to the time of Montanus, there can be little doubt but that he was one of these Encratites. According to Epiphanius, this sect was formed in the twelfth year of Antoninus Pius, and was established in a part of Phrygia, of which Montanus was a native†.

That persons of Montanus's turn of thinking should mistake the natural emotions of their own minds for divine impulses, is not at all extraordinary. This we see to have been the case with persons of all religions, heathens, mahometans, and christians. We find even at this day how unwilling men of good sense in other respects are to give up all idea of supernatural assistance, or of invisible miracles, such as are incapable of any proper proof, especially upon extraordinary occasions. When they

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 29. p. 193.

† Hær. 45. Sect. i. p. 391. Hær. 46. Sect. i. p. 399.

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they see men make great exertions, either in doing or suffering, they are apt to imagine that they have the aid of more power than their own. They are even apt to think so with respect to themselves. The early christians had this idea with respect to the power of bearing torture in martyrdom ; whereas the natural powers of man, and the principles of christianity, will appear to those who consider the force of them, abundantly sufficient for all that we read of men having borne, or done, in those circumstances.

The opinion of the natural weakness of the human mind, and of the necessity of foreign aid to produce any thing great or good, is the foundation of all that enthusiasm, which, in all ages, and to this very day, has been the disgrace of christianity. The whole of the Calvinistic doctrine of the *new birth*, or as it is called, the work of God in the soul of man, is built upon it. It was, in fact, the same ignorance of the powers of nature, and the idea of the perpetual interference of superior powers in all the affairs of men, which laid the foundation of the whole system of Paganism. Hence the persuasion of the influence of the sun, moon, and stars, in all events, and then that of dead men in the concerns of the living ; and hence all the strange rites and ceremonies which have ever been imagined to be proper to gain the favour of those imaginary powers.

Where

Where there is this ignorance of nature, and of true philosophy, pretences to inspiration will easily gain credit. Thus the violent agitations of the Heathen priests, and the similar ones of the Montanists, of the French prophets, and of the early Quakers, contributed to produce the persuasion of their being under some supernatural impulse; and the same is generally thought in the East to be the cause of the ravings of madmen.

Farther, as men are apt to admire what they find difficult to practice, austerity of manner and rigour of discipline have always been popular. This we see in other religions besides the christian, as in the case of the Fakirs of Indostan, and the Dervizes among the Mahometans. This it was that chiefly recommended the Novatians, who borrowed much from the Montanists. It has also been the chief recommendation of the monastic discipline, and especially the more rigorous kinds of it.

The principal followers of Montanus were two women of fortune, Priscilla and Maximilla, and also Quintilla mentioned by Epiphanius, who all pretended to the gift of prophecy; but though Maximilla foretold the approach of wars and tumults, it was observed that nothing of that kind happened from the time of her death till thirteen years after.

These two women were said to have been married, but to have divorced themselves from their husbands

husbands when they appeared as propheteſſes, and this they are ſaid to have encouraged in others who were diſpoſed to join them\*. They were both natives of Pepuſa in Pnrvgia, and they called this place, and alſo Tymium, by the name of Jeruſalem; as if that was to be the centre of a new and purer mode of worſhip, and the place where the chriſt the place to wait for the deſcent of the ſpirit. From ſtians were of the nativity of theſe women, the Montaniſts were ſometimes called Pepuſianſt.

This ſect ſpread chiefly in Aſia Minor, where it aroſe, and in Thyatira there was hardly any other chriſtianity proteſſed†; but it extended itſelf alſo to other places, and ſome very diſtant ones, eſpecially Africa, where it was embraced by the celebrated Tertullian. Montanus had ſeveral other followers of eminence beſides theſe, eſpecially Alcibiades and Theodotus§.

When the extravagances of the Montaniſts ſpread, as they ſoon did, into diſtant countries, they were ſtrenuouſly oppoſed by the more ſober part of the chriſtian world; among others, Sotas biſhop of Anchialus in Thrace, taking it for granted that it was an evil ſpirit that had got poſſeſſion of Prifcilla, endeavoured to exorcife her, and in

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v, Cap. 18, p. 233

† Ibid, Lib. v. Cap. 18, p. 234.

‡ Epiphani, Hær. 51, Sec. 33, Opera Vol. i, p. 455

§ Euseb Hist. Lib. v, Cap. 3, p. 212.

conjunction with other bishops he excommunicated her.\*

Several synods or councils, were also held in Asia Minor, especially one at Iconium, in which Firmilian presided, in which the Montanists were excommunicated, and the baptism administered by them declared to be null.† On this they formed separate societies, calling themselves the *spiritual* and other christians *carnal*. It is said that Victor bishop of Rome for some time favoured them, and received them into his communion. Their churches were small, but numerous, and they soon divided into a great variety of sects, which cannot be wondered at, considering the principle on which they separated from other christians. Pretensions to inspiration being incapable of proof would be various and discordant; and they who professed to be guided by a divine spirit, would not yield to the controul of their brethren.

By the enemies of the Montanists many things were laid to their charge, which, being the reverse of their general principles and maxims, we cannot suppose to have had any foundation in truth, such as the studious ornamenting of their persons, playing at dice, the love of money, &c.‡ I only mention

\* Ibid, Lib. v, Cap. 19, p. 237. Epiph. Hær. 48, Opera, Vol. i, p. 402.

† Cypriani Epist. 75, p. 226.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Lib. v, Cap. 18, p. 235.



mention these things to shew what absurd calumnies were raised, propagated, and believed, concerning persons, who, on other accounts, had made themselves obnoxious, and with what allowance we should read what Eusebius and other antient writers say of the Gnostics, the Ebionites, the Unitarians in general, the Manichæans, &c. and what was afterwards said of the Arians and others.

With respect to the doctrines which then began to divide the christian world relating to the person of Christ, the Montanists held nothing that was peculiar to themselves; but many of them, as well as other christians in that age, were Unitarians. Such was Praxeas, against whom Tertullian wrote, and there were so many others of them who retained the Unitarian doctrine, that by later writer the Montanists in general are sometimes charged with professing it. But the Montanists do not appear to have had many persons of learning among them; and as to the unlearned, and common people, it is evident, from the acknowledgment of Tertullian and others, that in this age, and to a much later period, they were almost universally Unitarians. According to the author of the Appendix to Tertullian's treatise *De prescriptione*, they were only the Montanists who followed Eschines who were Unitarians, while they who followed Proclus were of a different opinion\*. For

these

\* Sect. 52. p. 223.

these persons distinguished themselves as leaders among the Montanists, and were at the head of what may be called separate schools. Eschines was the earlier of the two.

Some of the Montanists distinguished themselves as writers. Among them were Priscilla and Maximilla, whose writings were considered in as high a degree as the scriptures themselves. What Tertullian has written concerning the human soul, in his treatise on that subject, is chiefly derived from the supposed revelations in their books. No writer, however, contributed so much to increase the reputation, and the number, of the Montanists, as Tertullian himself, though none of his works that are now extant contain a regular defence of their principles. Patroclus wrote in defence of Montanism, but his treatise is not now extant.

The writers against the Montanists were chiefly Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Miltiades of Athens, Serapion of Antioch, and Caius who answered Patroclus\*. To these Jerom adds Rhodon a disciple of Tatian. But as Eusebius gives a pretty large account of his writings, and makes no mention of any such treatise of his, it is not very probable that he wrote any thing on the subject.

It does not appear that this sect met with any particular opposition in Africa; but it was soon lost in

\* Theod. Har. Fab. Lib. iii. Cap. ii. Opera Vol. iv. p. 227.

in that of the Novatians, and afterwards that of the Donatists. It appears, indeed, to have been on the decline soon after the time of Tertullian, and we find no mention of it after the fifth century. I have therefore chosen to give all that I have found to say about it in this one place.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the Origin of the Doctrine of the Trinity.*

THE period of which I am now treating will be for ever noted for the introduction of a doctrine which led to that of *the Trinity*, as it is now held in all established christian churches, and which may justly be called the greatest of all the corruptions of christianity, as it infringes upon that fundamental and most important of all doctrines, the unity of God, in the person of the supreme Father. This was the work of the Platonic philosophers, who when they embraced christianity retained much of their former tenets; and the rather, as, in their opinion, these doctrines contributed to enhance the dignity of the head of their new religion, so that he might with propriety be denominated *God*, as well

as *man*. And the greatest objection to the christian religion in all the early ages was the meanness of its founder, viz. a crucified malefactor.

According to Plato, there are three *principles* (*αρχαί*) as he termed them, in the universe, *The good*, or the supreme mind, the *vous*, his *intellect*, or *ideas*, and *ψυχή*, or the *soul of the world*. The second of these principles, Philo, the learned Jew of Alexandria, called *logos*, a term borrowed from the scriptures, in consequence of its being there said, that the world was made by the *word*, or *logos*, of God; as Plato had made his (*vous*) *ideas* or *intelligible world*, to be the immediate source, or cause of the visible universe. In the application of these principles to the Jewish religion, the *logos*, that power, or principle, from which the universe originated was thought to be something emitted from the supreme mind, and capable of being drawn into it again, as a ray of light was then conceived to be with respect to the sun. This divine ray, or emanation, was supposed not only to have made the world, but also to have appeared to the patriarchs, to have delivered the law from mount Sinai, and to have been that bright cloud, or glory, which had been the symbol of the divine presence in the tabernacle and the temple.

To this doctrine the platonizing christians added, that this divine ray, or *logos*, was permanently attached to the person of Jesus Christ; and this  
emanation

emanation being of the essence of God, Christ, they said, might, on this account, be properly called *God*. According to these philosophizing christians, therefore, the whole person of Christ consisted of three parts, viz. a body; a proper human soul, and also this divine uncreated *logos*; so that he was both God and man. But then, as the *logos* was only supposed to be something emitted from the supreme mind, just as a ray of light is from the sun, they were always careful to speak of Christ as a being, who, though he was properly *divine*, was, nevertheless, far inferior to the Father, as a beam of light is to the sun. And they were the more careful to do this, that they might not give too much offence to the great body of christians, who were justly alarmed at a notion which looked so like a violation of the greatest doctrine of all revelation, that of the *unity of God*.

The opinion, of a *divine ray*, called the *logos*, being permanently attached to the man Jesus, and constituting a proper part of his person, appears first in the writings of Justin Martyr, who had been a Platonic philosopher, and who, when he became a christian, continued to be a great admirer of Plato. Afterwards, many other learned christians, especially those who were educated at Alexandria, where the Platonic philosophy was principally taught, adopted the same notion; and by this means they distinguished themselves from the unlearned christians.

christians, as holding a more *sublime* doctrine than they were capable of comprehending. The doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ they considered as *milk fit for babes*; but that of the divinity, as *meat for strong men*. This was the constant language of the learned christians for many ages.

It is evident, however, that the new doctrine, though thus qualified, and ingeniously explained, gave much offence to the great body of unlearned christians; and even many of the most distinguished for their learning, in every period, protested against it. But at length they were overborne by the majority of the learned bishops and clergy, and by them this system was in time so far improved, or rather changed, that Christ was asserted to be, in all respects, equal to God his Father.

Justin Martyr himself, when he first advanced his opinion, did it with great diffidence, without the least censure of those who thought differently from him, and even with the air of an apology, as for something that he was apprehensive might give offence. "It will not follow," says he\*. "that he is not the Christ, though I should not be able to prove that he pre-existed as God, the son of him that made all things, and that he became a man by the virgin. It is proved that he is the Christ, the son of God, whoever he was, though I should not prove that he pre-existed, but was a  
man

\* Dial. p. 233.

“ man of the same passions with ourselves, having  
 “ flesh, and being subject to his Father’s will. It  
 “ will be right to say, that in this only I have been  
 “ mistaken, and not that he is not the Christ,  
 “ though he should appear to be a man, born as  
 “ other men are, and to be made Christ by electi-  
 “ on. For there are some of our race” (meaning  
 probably the Gentile christians, for all the Jewish  
 christians are well known to have held this opinion)  
 “ who say that he was a man born like other men.  
 “ With them I do not agree, nor should I do so,  
 “ though ever so many, being of the same opinion,  
 “ should urge it upon me, because we are com-  
 “ manded by Christ himself, not to obey the teach-  
 “ ings of men, but what was taught by the holy  
 “ prophets and himself.”

It is plain that, according to the unitarian doc-  
 trine to which Justin here alludes, Jesus was the  
 son of Joseph, as well as of Mary. It is therefore  
 probable, that this was the opinion of the unitari-  
 ans, that is, of the christians in general, at this time ;  
 and that the doctrine, of the miraculous concep-  
 tion, as well as those of the pre-existence and divi-  
 nity of Christ, arose about the same period.

Trypho, in his reply to Justin, gives a decided  
 preference to this doctrine of the proper humanity of  
 Christ, without a miraculous conception, to any  
 other. “ They,” says he\*, “ who say that he was

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“ a man

\* Dial. p. 233.

“ a man, born like other men, and that he became  
 “ of Christ by election” (that is, by the appointment  
 God) “ seem to hold a doctrine more credible  
 “ than yours. For all of us expect that Christ  
 “ will be a man, and that Elias will come to anoint  
 “ him. If, therefore, this person be the Christ, he  
 “ must by all means be a man, born like other  
 “ men.”

The comparison of the deity to the sun, and of  
 his energies to the rays of light, emitted from him,  
 and drawn into him again, had unfortunately been  
 adopted before Justin Martyr, by some who were  
 properly unitarians. A divine ray of this kind they  
 supposed was emitted at the creation. The same,  
 they said was the glory which appeared to Moses,  
 and the patriarchs, and to have constituted those  
 appearances which are denominated angels. A ray  
 of this kind they supposed likewise to reside in Jesus  
 Christ, and that by this he worked miracles while  
 he was upon earth, but that it was withdrawn from  
 him when he ascended into heaven. Some of them  
 might go so far as to say, that since this ray was  
 properly *divine*, and the divinity of the Father,  
 Christ, who had this divine ray within him, might  
 be called *God*, but by no means God different  
 from the Father. They are moreover charged  
 with saying, that the Father, being in Christ,  
 suffered and died in him also, and from this they  
 got the name of *Patripassians*. But Beaufobre,  
 with



with great probability, supposes that this was only what their adversaries charged them with, as the necessary consequence of their opinions. It is not, indeed, certain, since none of their own writings are extant, that they ever, in any sense, called Christ God. Their saying that this divine ray was in Christ, was nothing more than expressing, in the philosophical language of the times, that the presence and power of God the Father was with Christ, and that this power, and not any proper power of his own, was that which worked the miracles Justin Martyr, who mentions this opinion\*, says nothing of those who held it calling Christ God, and much less of their maintaining that God suffered.

This opinion, however, of the divine power or energy, which was in Christ, being only a divine ray emitted from the Supreme Being, and drawn into him again, Justin disapproved; supposing that after it was attached to the person of Christ, it was never withdrawn from him. He would not, however, say that this divine ray, though permanently attached to Christ, and making an essential part of his person, was ever properly separated from its source, and in this consists the absurdity of the new doctrine. This opinion of his he illustrates by two comparisons; the one that of *speech*, or *logos*, which was the more convenient for his purpose, as this was the very term made use of by

Philo

\* Dial. p. 412

Philo to denote this divine ray by which the worlds were made. As speech, conveying a *meaning*, says he, goes forth from one man and enters into others, by which they comprehend his meaning, while the same meaning still remains in the person who speaks, so the logos of the Father continues entire to himself, though it be imparted to Christ.

He also illustrates this transferring of divinity from the Father to the Son by one lamp lighting others, without losing any of its splendour.

The natural inference from both these comparisons would be, that divine beings were *multiplied*, because a lamp, though lighted by another, is a perfectly distinct lamp; and *speech* also, or *meaning*, communicated to another person, is numerically different from that which remains in him who communicated it, and they continue independent of each other. But Justin and his followers were careful not to pursue this comparison so far; and they all maintained that speech, or meaning, though transferred to another, was still the identical *same* meaning that was in the other; and that the light of the second lamp was not *another*, but the very same light with that of the first. By this subtle distinction they thought to avoid the charge of making more gods than one, which no believer in divine revelation would bear. On the other hand, the philosophical Unitarians admitted of no distinction

distinction, or difference whatever, between the divinity of the Father and that which was in the Son ; so that their adversaries always charged them with *confounding* the persons of the Father and the Son, as the Arians were charged with *separating* them.

That Justin Martyr's doctrine of the divinity of Christ was little known at the time that he wrote, is pretty evident from the consideration of another production of the same age, which with respect to ingenuity and information, is not inferior to any of the writings of those who are usually called the Fathers. I mean the *Clementine Homilies*, which is properly a theological romance, in which the writer personates Clemens, afterwards bishop of Rome ; and in an account of his travels, and those of Peter and Simon Magus, intermixed with a variety of other incidents, he introduces all the theological knowledge of the times. The author of this work not only appears to be an unitarian himself, and of course represents Peter and Clemens as such, but he never so much as mentions such an opinion as that of Justin Martyr, though he had the fairest opportunity of doing it.

When he introduces Simon disputing with Peter on the plurality of Gods, one supreme and the rest subordinate, and urging as an *argument ad hominem*, that this kind of plurality may be proved even from the scriptures, as from God saying, *Let us make man* ; Peter replies, that in this " God  
" spake

“ spake to his own wisdom, which is his spirit united as a soul to God\*,” that is, he spake to *himself*; whereas Justin Martyr, and all the advocates of Christ being the *logos*, would have said that this speech was addressed to the *logos*, or Christ.

Justin and his followers vindicated the propriety of Christ being called *God*, as he was the uncreated *logos* of the Father; but in this work Peter says, “ To us there is one God, who made all things, and governs all things, whose son Christ is.” Again “ Our Lord never said that there was any other God besides him that made all things; nor did he ever call himself *God*, but pronounced him blessed who called him the Son of God†.” This was in answer to Simon, who had said that, according to the rule laid down by Moses, Christ ought to have been rejected, either as a false prophet, or another God.

In this work it is likewise alleged as an argument, why a being produced even from the substance of God by way of generation (for such, according to the philosophy of the times, was the origin of all *souls*, both of men and angels) ought not therefore to be called *God*, that “ he who is not, in all respects, the same with any other, cannot be intitled to the same appellation. It is the property of the Father to beget, and of the Son

“ to

\* Hom, xvi. Sect. 12. p. 727.

† Ibid. xvi, Sect. 15. p. 728.

“ to be begotten. But that which is begotten cannot be compared with that which is unbegotten or self-begotten.” This is the very reverse of the doctrine of Justin Martyr and his followers, who obtained the name of orthodox. For they maintained the propriety of calling Christ God, because he was begotten, or produced from the substance of the Father, though inferior to him ; *God of God, light of light*, as it is expressed in the Nicene creed.

Let any person now judge, whether the author of this curious work could have written in this manner, on maxims so diametrically opposite to those of the supposed standard orthodoxy of his times, without at least making some mention of them, or alluding to them. It is therefore almost certain that this writer had never heard of such a notion as that of Justin, and that this was the reason why he took no notice of it.

## SECTION V.

*Of the State of the Jews in this Period, and the subsequent ones, collected chiefly from Basnage's History of them.*

AFTER the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were governed by *Patriarchs*, the first of whom that is known to us lived in the time of Adrian. He was descended from Hillel who lived in the time of our Saviour ; and this dignity continued in his family till the year 429. His residence was at Tiberias, where the Jews had an academy for the study of their law.

This patriarch had under him several officers, some of whom are also called *prtriarchs* in the laws of the Roman empire ; but their jurisdiction was confined to particular places, and they were sent out by the principal patriarch as the occasions of his government required, especially to collect the tribute which every synagogue paid him. This was exacted with so much rigour that complaints were sometimes made of it to the Roman emperors. The patriarch had likewise the nomination of the rulers of synagogues, and the power of erecting

new

new synagogues, as well as that of deciding all differences relating to the interpretation of the law. This power of erecting new synagogues was forbidden by the emperor Theodosius II. as was also the converting of any person to the Jewish religion.

The first of these patriarchs, of whom we have any account, and probably the first that was created, was Gamaliel II. in the time of Nerva; the second was Simeon III. in the time of Adrian; and he was succeeded by his son, the famous Judah Hakkadosh, or *the holy*, who lived in the reigns of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus. He was born on the same day that Akiba, a famous Jewish Rabbi, died, which was in the reign of Adrian; and he distinguished himself by a collection of the decisions of the ancient Jewish doctors, or a compilation of a body of the Jewish canon and civil law, called the *Mishna*, probably about the year 180.

Hillel II. a descendant of Judah Hakkadosh, was the author of the Jewish æra of the creation of the world, the year 3761 of which corresponds to the first of the christian æra. He also composed the Jewish cycle, to reduce the course of the sun to that of the moon, by means of seven intercalations. This Hillel governed the Jewish nation till about the year 385; and the last of these patriarchs was Gamaliel, mentioned by Jerom about

A. D. 392. This dignity was abolished A. D. 429, after it had subsisted three hundred and fifty years.

To these patriarchs succeeded *Primates*, who were elected by the Jews, one in each province; but Theodosius the younger ordered the contributions which were made for their support, and which were the same that had been granted to the patriarchs, to be paid into the public treasury.

About the same time that the Western Jews were governed by patriarchs, who resided at Tiberias, the Eastern Jews were governed by a person who was stiled *the Prince of the Captivity*, at Babylon. The first of these was Huna, who was contemporary with Judah Hakkadosh, and was chosen prince of the nation, A. D. 220 or 222.

The Mishna of Judah Hakkadosh being imperfect, its defects were remedied by Jochanan, assisted by Rab and Samuel, two of his disciples, and they called their work *Gemara*; and this, added to the Mishna, makes what is called the *Talmud of Jerusalem*. The defects of this work, R. Ase, who had a school at Sora, near Babylon, endeavoured to remove in another commentary on the Mishna of Judah; and his commentary, or *Gemara*, together with the Mishna, makes the *Talmud of Babylon*, which is generally supposed to have been compleated about A. D. 500, or 505. This Talmud the Jews afterwards held in such high esteem, that they even preferred it to the scriptures; comparing



paring the latter to water, and the former to wine. "He that offends against the law of Moses," they say, "may be pardoned; but he who offends against the decisions of their doctors, is deserving of death."

It is remarkable, that about the time that the doctrine of the trinity came to be generally professed by learned christians, we read of few or no converts to christianity from the Jews; and, no doubt, the teaching of such a doctrine as this, so repugnant to the most fundamental principles of their religion, must have contributed not a little to this effect. But, indeed, from this time the learned christians appear to have had little intercourse with the Jews, hardly any of them taking the pains even to learn Hebrew; and the same in general has been the case with the Jews and christians to the present day.

It is hoped, however, that when the Jews shall fully understand that the doctrine of the trinity, which gives them such great and just offence, is rejected, by learned and well informed christians, so as to be convinced that it is unquestionably a corruption of genuine christianity, they will give more attention than they have hitherto done to the historical evidences of christianity; and whenever they do this, they must perceive that they are even stronger and clearer than those which they can allege for the divine mission of Moses. They will

will also see, if they read the New Testament for themselves, and judge of it without prejudice, that there is no contrariety or opposition between the two religions ; since, whenever they become christians, they are to continue subject to their peculiar laws and ritual, as Christ and the apostles, who were also Jews, did ; and that, as Jews there is reserved for them a permanent establishment in their own country, where they are to be the most distinguished nation upon earth. For such is the necessary interpretation of all the ancient prophecies.

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## SECTION VI.

### *Of the Writers within this Period.*

I SHALL now give a short account of the christian writers within this period, nearly in the order in which they are mentioned by Eusebius. The first of them is *Hegeſippus*, whom, indeed, he places in the time of Adrian.\* He was a Jew, and the author of an ecclesiastical history, or a continuation

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv, Cap. 8. p. 150.

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uation of the Acts of the Apostles, written in a very plain style. It is unfortunately lost, and is by some thought to have been neglected on account of its containing some things that were too favourable to the unitarian doctrine.

Besides Hegesippus there were three other Jewish christian writers in this period; viz. Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, all of whom distinguished themselves by their translations of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, and I chuse to mention them all together, though the last of them more properly belongs to the next period. Aquila is said to have flourished A. D. 130, Theodotion in 180, and Symmachus in 200. Their versions are quoted with great respect by all christian writers, especially that of Symmachus, though they are not now extant, except that of Daniel by Theodotion, which is that which has been generally adopted instead of the LXX. which has been discovered very lately.

Symmachus wrote a commentary on the gospel of Matthew, in which he endeavoured to disprove the opinion of the miraculous conception of Jesus\*. Aquila also and Theodotion, as well as the Jewish christians in general, were probably unbelievers in that part of the common gospel history, as Eusebius says of them, that "they were  
" Jewish

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 17. p. 273.

"Jewish profelytes, who (the Ebionites following them) believe Christ to be the son of Joseph\*."

In the reign of Adrian was Agrippa surnamed Castor. He wrote against Basilides the Gnostict.

Justin Martyr, besides his two Apologies for christianity, mentioned before, and his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, proving the truth of the christian religion on the principles of Judaism, wrote also a treatise of monarchy, proving against the heathens the unity of God, the second part of which is still extant. He also wrote another treatise against the Gentiles, another on heresies, another on the soul, and a book intitled Psaltes, but they have not come down to us†.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote epistles to several of the christian churches, inculcating good morals, and guarding them against heresy, that is, Gnosticism. He particularly commends the christians at Rome for the assistance they gave to those who suffered for their religion. He complained of some of his epistles being corrupted§.

One of the epistles of Dionysius was addressed to Pinytus a bishop in Crete, advising him not to impose on the brethren the yoke of celibacy. To this

\* Euseb. Lib. v. Cap. 8. p. 221.

† Ibid. Lib. iv. Cap. 7. p. 148.

‡ Ibid. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 18. p. 179:

§ Ibid. Lib. iv. Cap. 23. p. 185.

this Penytus wrote in answer, that we must not always be giving milk as to babes, but sometimes meat to strong men\*. In this we see the progress of superstition, and the secret influence of those principles which were the foundation of Gnosticism, and of the doctrine of the Encratites. Neither the epistle of Pinytus, nor any of those of Dionysius are extant.

Of Theophilus bishop of Antioch, the seventh from the apostles, there are now extant three books addressed to Autolycus, against the heathen religion. He also wrote against the heresy of Hermogenes, a Gnostic, and against Marcion†. He is the first writer who uses the word *Trinity*.

Philip, bishop of Gortyne in Crete and also Modestus, wrote against Marcion‡.

Melito, bishop of Sardis, was a pretty voluminous writer ; but nothing of his is come down to us, except a few fragments preserved by Eusebius. He wrote a treatise on Easter, of the rule of life of the lives of the prophets, of the church, of the Lord's day, of the natural formation of man, of the subjection of the senses to faith, of the soul, body, and mind, of baptism, of truth, of the creation and generation of Christ, of prophecy, of hospitality, a book entitled the key, of the devil, of the revelation

\* Euseb. Lib. iv. Cap. 23. p. 186.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 24. p. 187.

‡ Ibid. Lib. iv. Cap. 25, p. 188.

lation of John, of the corporality of God, which He is said to have maintained ; and an Apology for christianity, addressed to the emperor Marcus Antoninus, of which an extract has been given. In one of his works, Melito gave a catalogue of all the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is preserved by Eusebius. It contains none of those that we call apocryphal\*.

Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, wrote an Apology for christianity addressed to Marcus Antoninus, a treatise against the gentiles, on truth, against the Jews, and against the Montanists†.

Tatian was a great admirer of Justin Martyr, but after his death he adopted some opinions of the Gnostics, which favoured of too great austerity, enjoining abstinence from animal food, and also from marriage. His followers, called Encratites, are also said to have had an aversion to the apostle Paul and his writings. Tatian wrote a harmony of the gospels, and many other works, the titles of which are now lost. All that we have of his works is his treatise against the Gentiles, and this was the most admired of all writings‡.

Mufanus, of whom we know nothing besides the name, wrote against the Encratites§, but the work is not now extant. Barde-

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 26, p. 191.

† Ibid. Lib. iv, Cap. 27, p. 191.

‡ Ibid. Lib. iv, Cap. 29, p. 193.

§ Ibid, Lib. iv, Cap. 28, p. 192.

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Bardefanes, who wrote in the Syriac language, was the author of several works, all of which are now lost, one against Marcion, another concerning fate, and a treatise relating to persecution. He had been at first a follower of Valentinus, and according to Eusebius always retained something of his sentiments\*.

Irenæus, bishop of Lions, was a disciple of Polycarp, when he was very old, and also of Papias. We have in a Latin translation, a large treatise of his against heresy, with many fragments of the original Greek. It relates almost wholly to the Gnostics, though he occasionally and very severely animadverts on the Ebionites, or Jewish christians, for not admitting any divinity in Christ. He also wrote several epistles, one to Blastus concerning schism, another to Florinus concerning monarchy, to prove that God is not the author of evil, and another to the same concerning the Ogdoad of Valentinus†.

Athenagoras, an Athenian and a philosopher, is the author of an Apology for the christians addressed to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and also of a Treatise on the Resurrection, both now extant, though he is not mentioned by Eusebius or Jerom.

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Rhodon

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 30. p. 195.

† Ibid. Lib. v. Cap. 20. p. 237.

Rhodon a native of Asia, but educated at Rome under Tatian, wrote against the disciples of Marcion, who were then divided into several sects. He also wrote a treatise on the work of the six days\*. Jerom says, he wrote against the Montanists, but in this he is thought to be mistaken. Nothing is extant of his besides some extracts preserved in Eusebius.

To this list of writers I must add the unknown author of the present *Sibylline verses*, which were probably composed at different times, and the last additions to them allude to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. They are first quoted by Justin Martyr, and what is not a little extraordinary, they were received by him, and the christian writers in general, as the genuine prophetic, verses, or oracles, of those women who went by the name of *Sibyls*; whereas nothing can be more evident than that they are the work of some christian, who, from some very wrong motive, endeavoured to avail himself of the credit they had obtained for the service of christianity, which stands in no need of such supports.

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 13. p. 225.



PERIOD VI.

FROM THE REIGN OF COMMODUS, A. D. 180,  
TO THAT OF DECIUS, A. D. 249.

SECTION I.

*The general History of this Period.*

COMMODUS, who had neither the understanding, nor the bigotry of his father, did not interest himself in the affairs of the christians, any more than in those of the empire in general, but abandoned himself to the most brutal pleasures. In consequence of this the christian church in general had peace, and increased greatly, and many persons of rank and fortune joined the christians. We have, however, one example of a martyrdom in this reign at Rome, and there may have been many others, of which we have no account, in other parts of the empire.

Apollonius, a Roman senator, a man of letters, and attached to the study of philosophy, was accused by his own slave, a man of a bad character,

ter, of being a christian ; and being brought before Perennis, the prefect of the Prætorian guards, he was by him referred to the senate, of which he was a member, But tho' he there made an excellent oration in defence of his faith, he was condemned to die ; the law which ordained that a person confessing himself to be a christian should be put to death still remaining in force. The accuser, however, was sentenced to have his legs broken, having been guilty, as Eusebius says, of a capital crime. \*

Commodus reigned thirteen years, and after him Severus eighteen. In the first years of his reign the christians continued to be unmolested, owing, it is said, to the influence of a favourite slave. But afterwards, for what particular reason does not appear, he allowed the persecution of the christians to proceed according to the standing laws. By some this is accounted for in the following manner. Albinus, the competitor of Severus in the empire, being defeated by him near Lyons, that city was miserably sacked, and on this occasion the christians suffered extremely, after they had enjoyed

\* Hist. Lib. v, Cap. 21, p. 239. What this capital offence was does not distinctly appear. Some interpreters say that by a law of M. Antoninus, it was a capital crime to accuse a person of being a christian, though at the same time it was death for any person voluntarily to declare himself one. But this is so inconsistent, that it is in the highest degree improbable.

enjoyed a state of repose of thirty years, from the dreadful persecution mentioned above. In this interval Irenæus had been made bishop, and by his assiduity, the exemplary lives of the christians, and especially their fortitude in bearing persecution, it is said that almost all the citizens were become christians. If this was the case, and if they had taken the part of Albinus, it will not be thought extraordinary that Severus should have been exasperated against the christians in general. This happened in the sixth year of his reign.

When, after this, Severus set out on his expedition against Persia, he left Plautian prefect of the city. This was a man who had been raised from a low beginning, and who made a bad use of his power, especially against the christians. But the persecution was general, and violent, from the tenth year of Severus, to his death. According to Spartian, Severus made laws to prevent the increase of the Jews, or christians; and if he did nothing more than this, it would be evident that he bore them no good will; and this would sufficiently encourage those who were disposed to execute any of the standing laws against them.

Many christians suffered for their religion in Africa in this reign. Rutilius, who had fled from place to place, and who had given money to some soldiers to connive at his escape, was at length apprehended, and though grievously tormented, and then

then burned alive, he bore the whole with great resolution\*. Mavilus was also condemned by the preconful Scapula to be thrown to the wild beasts†.

This persecution was particularly severe in Alexandria, and in Egypt in general, where the martyrs bore torture and death with as much heroism as upon former occasions. At this time Leonidas the father of the famous Origen was beheaded‡.

Origen, who was then very young, distinguished himself greatly by his zeal for christianity, as well as his learning. He particularly exhorted all those to whom he had access to bear their sufferings with fortitude; and several of those to whom he was preceptor behaved with the greatest resolution. Some of them are particularly mentioned by Eusebius. The first of them was called Plutarch, and as Origen attended him to the last, he was in great danger of suffering himself. The second was Serenus, who was burned, the third Heraclides, and the fourth Heron; both beheaded. The fifth, after bearing much torture, was beheaded also. The sixth was a woman, Heros, who was burned. The seventh, Basilides, was beheaded.

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\* Tertullian De fuga. Cap. v. p. 538.

† Ad Scapulam. Cap. 3, p. 70.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 1, p. 257.

There is something remarkable in the history of this Basilides, as connected with that of another celebrated martyr, Potamiana. She was a woman distinguished for her beauty and chastity, and who, after being much tortured, was burned, together with her mother Marcella; boiling pitch being poured over them from head to foot, which they bore with the greatest constancy. Potamiana had been threatened with prostitution, but had been protected from the insults of the mob by Basilides, who was the soldier to whose custody she had been committed. She, seeing his humanity, said she would reward him after her death, by praying for his salvation. Being afterwards committed to custody for not taking the military oath, because it was an act of idolatry, and being asked how he came to be converted, he said that Potamiana had appeared to him in a dream, and told him she had obtained her request, and that he would soon be taken to heaven\*. It is very possible, such was the superstition of this age, that this woman might make such a promise, it being no uncommon thing so to do; and this might have so impressed the mind of this man, as to produce his dream, without there being any thing miraculous in the case.

Severus returning in triumph to Rome gave the soldiers who attended him crowns to wear upon their heads on that occasion; but this being declined

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 5. p. 262.

declined by one of them, who was a christian, and who chose to carry it in his hand, he was dismissed from the service, and committed to prison for punishment. This conduct offended many of the christians, who thought that the soldier had provoked the emperor unnecessarily ; but Tertullian wrote a treatise to defend his conduct, and of this some account will be given hereafter.

Caracalla, the son of Severus, who reigned six years, from A. D. 211, to A. D. 217, was a monster of wickedness and cruelty, but he spared the christians ; as also did Heliogabalus, a man of a similar character. However, the laws against christians being unrepealed, some governors of provinces took advantage of this circumstance to harass them ; and some think that it was under this emperor that Scapula, to whom Tertullian addressed an Apology, exercised his severities in Africa. Heliogabalus being a Syrian, and determined to give the god of his country (to whom he had been a priest) and the rites of his religion, a preference to all others, was the occasion of many persons giving their attention to the subject ; in consequence of which they were led to see the folly of all kinds of idolatry, and came to embrace christianity.

The reign of Alexander Severus, from A. D. 222, to A. D. 235, was peculiarly favourable to the christians, in consequence of his mother Mammæa, an excellent woman, openly protecting them

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them, though it does not appear that she was a christian. Hearing of the fame of Origen, she sent for him when she was at Antioch, and retained him with her some time\*. But notwithstanding the good disposition of the emperor, several of the governors of provinces continued to harass the christians. Even Ulpian, the famous lawyer, is said to have promoted the persecution. But it is not at all extraordinary, that, being a Pagan, he, as a lawyer, should encourage the execution of the laws, and be desirous of supporting the established religion.

That this emperor himself had a respect for Christ, is evident from his joining him, as well as Abraham, to Orpheus, and the emperors who had been deified, and performing to them certain acts of religion in his private chapel†.

Maximin, a man of savage manners, having succeeded to the empire on the death of Alexander, was an enemy of the christians, on account, it may be thought, of his predecessor having favoured them; but he only ordered that their ministers should be put to death. Nor did the persecution extend to all the provinces of the empire: It fell with the greatest severity on Pontus and Cappadocia, owing to the particular bigotry of the presi-

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dents

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. C. 21. p. 286.

† Lampridii. Vita. Sec. 29, p. 540.

dents of those provinces; but many of the christians withdrew from them, and were safe.

From the valuable letter of Firmilian to Cyprian it appears that the persecutions in these provinces of Asia Minor, arose from the popular opinion that the dreadful earthquakes, with which they were then afflicted, and in which whole cities were swallowed up, were owing to the christians; and that it was greatly promoted by the violence of the prefect Serapianus\*.

Origen is thought to have been particularly aimed at by Maximin, but he escaped by concealing himself. At this time, however, he wrote his treatise on martyrdom, and addressed it to Ambrosius, one of his pupils, and also to Protocletus, a presbyter of the church of Cæsarea, because both of them had run great risques in this persecution, and had derived great honour from their behaviour in it. Maximin did not reign more than three years†.

We read of no persecution of the christians during the reign of Gordian, from A. D. 236, to A. D. 244, or in that of Philip, from A. D. 244 to A. D. 249, with which I shall close this period of my history. The latter of these emperors is supposed by

Euse-

\* Cypriani, Opera. p. 222.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 23. p. 293.



Eusebius\*, but without sufficient ground, to have been a christian†.

Thus we have seen that, in this long period, there was no severe or general persecution of the christians of many years continuance, though it is probable that, during the whole of it, they suffered considerably in some particular provinces, owing to the bigotry of the presidents, or the violence of the mob. However, both the times of peace and of persecution were, in different ways, favourable to the growth of christianity. Persecution, besides encreasing the zeal of the christians, preserving the purity of their morals, and checking the violence with which their differences among themselves would, no doubt, have otherwise been carried on, excited in unbelievers a desire to know the grounds of that faith which produced such wonderful effects; and, as Tertullian observes, the usual effect of inquiry was conviction. On the other hand, when times of peace and security returned, the christians, with a fervour of zeal acquired in persecution, were most assiduous in spreading their faith. They had felt the value and the power of it themselves; and their benevolence, joined with a natural desire to strengthen their party, made them desirous of extending the blessings of it to others.

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\* Ibid. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 34, p. 298.

† For this I refer to Lardner's Testimonies, Vol. iii, p. 60.

## SECTION II.

*Of the Sufferings of Perpetua and Felicitas, with those of their Companions.*

THE martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, with that of their companions, in the reign of Severus, is so peculiarly interesting, that I have reserved the account of it for a separate section. The writer of this piece is unknown, but it bears unquestionable marks of antiquity, and appears to have been taken in part from the notes of Perpetua herself. It will, farther, serve to give us a clear idea of the manner in which these ancient persecutions were generally conducted. The case of Perpetua is just mentioned by Austin\*. The scene of the transaction was some place in Africa, probably Carthage.

On this occasion there were apprehended three young men of the class of catechumens, viz. Saturninus, Secundulus, and Revocatus, with Felicitas his fellow slave, and together with them Ubia Perpetua, a widow of about twenty-two years of age, of a good family, and well educated, who

\* De Anima, Cap. 55. Opera, Vol. vii. p. 304.

who had a father and mother living, two brothers (one of them a catechumen) and an infant at the breast.

As soon as Perpetua was informed against her father (who alone of all the family continued a heathen) used every method of persuasion, and even force, to induce her to desist from her purpose of suffering martyrdom, so that, she said, she was glad when he left her; and in this interval she and the rest were baptised. Some days after this they were all thrown into prison, and the treatment she met with there affected her at first very much; as the darkness of the place, the great heat occasioned by the number of prisoners, the rudeness of the soldiers, and especially her anxiety about her child. Two deacons, however, Tertius and Pomponius, who ministered to their wants, procured, by money, the removal of all of them into a more airy part of the prison, where Perpetua gave suck to her child, which was ready to die for want of it.

In this situation Perpetua comforted her mother, and encouraged her brother, intrusting to him the care of her son, and was as happy, she said, as if she had been in a palace. Here she had a remarkable dream, from which she concluded that she should certainly suffer, but by which she was, notwithstanding, greatly encouraged in her resolution.

A few

A few days after this there was a report that these christian prisoners would soon be called before the governor, and then her father, in great grief, came to her, entreating her to have compassion on his grey hairs, and on her mother, brother, and child, which, he said, could not survive her. This he did, kissing her hands, and throwing himself at her feet, which, shewing more affection than he had discovered before, gave her great concern. Besides, he was the only relation she had who would not, in reality, think themselves honoured by her conduct; but she only answered, that she was at the disposal of God, and not at her own.

The next day, while they were at dinner, they were suddenly called to an audience in the public forum, where a prodigious crowd was assembled. There all the company confessed that they were christians; but before Perpetua had an opportunity of doing it in the customary form, her father presented himself, holding her child in his arms, and begging that she would have compassion upon him. Alas! Hilarianus the procurator (who then acted in the place of the deceased pro-consul) joined him in his entreaties, and desired her to think of her aged father, and her own child, and to sacrifice for the safety of the emperor. But she only answered that she was a christian, and could not do it.

After

After this the father was ordered to desist, and as he retired unwillingly, one of the lictors struck him with a rod, which affected her, she said, as if the child bore struck herself. Then, having all made their confession, they were sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts, notwithstanding which, they returned with great joy to the prison. Thence she sent Romponius the deacon to request that her child might be sent to her as usual, to be suckled; but this favour was then refused. However, she bore the cruel disappointment better than she could have expected.

After a few days, Pudens the jailer, being disposed to favour them, allowed their friends to come to see them; and when the time of exhibition drew near, Perpetua's father came again; when he threw himself upon the ground, tore his beard, and did and said everything that could have a tendency to move her; but all had no other effect than to fill her with pity for him.

Our author now proceeds to give an account of some of the other prisoners; and the case of Felicitas is almost as interesting as that of Perpetua. Being eight months gone with child, she was much concerned lest her execution should be put off till another time, and that then she should die in the company of ordinary malefactors. The idea of going without her affected also her fellow prisoners. But three days before the exhibition she was delivered;

delivered; and being in great pain, those who attended her asked her how she should be able to bear what she would suffer when she was exposed to the wild beasts, when she was so much affected with the pains of child-birth. She replied that in this case, she was left to herself, but that in her other sufferings she should have another to support her, even him for whom she suffered. Being delivered of a daughter, a sister of her's undertook to bring it up. Secundulus died in prison; but they had been joined by another of their friends called Satorus, who after they were apprehended, had voluntarily surrendered himself.

The day before the exhibition they all joined in a love feast, with their christian friends who were permitted to visit them, in the presence of many strangers whom curiosity had brought to the place. To these the prisoners expressed great joy in the idea of their approaching sufferings, and endeavoured to engage their attention. Satorus, particularly, bade them observe their countenances, that they might know them all again the next day. From this extraordinary spectacle these strangers retired with marks of astonishment, and many of them afterwards became converts.

When the day of exhibition was come, they all went from the prison with erect and cheerful countenances, trembling, our author says, with joy rather than with fear. Perpetua especially walked  
in

in such a manner as struck the spectators with particular respect ; and Felicitas rejoiced that, being delivered of her child, she could accompany her friends to this glorious combat. When they were arrived at the gate of the amphitheatre, the officers, according to custom, began to clothe the men in the dresses of the priest of Saturn, and the women in those of the priestesses of Ceres. But when they remonstrated against the injustice of being compelled by force to do that, for refusing which they were willing to die, the tribune gave them leave to suffer in their own habits.

They then entered the amphitheatre ; when Perpetua advanced singing hymns, and Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satorus, solemnly warned the people as they went along. When they came in view of Hilarianus the proprætor, they said “ You judge us, but God will judge you.” This so provoked the populace, that at their request, all the three were scourged. But in this they rejoiced, as having the honour to share in one part of the sufferings of their Saviour.

When the beasts were let loose, Saturninus, according to a wish which he had previously expressed, died by the attack of several of them rushing upon him at the same time ; and Revocatus was killed by a leopard and a bear. Satorus was first exposed to a wild boar ; but while the officer who at-

tended was gored by him, so that he died the next day; he was only dragged about, and not materially hurt. Also a bear (which was an animal that he particularly dreaded) to which he was next exposed, would not go out of his den to meddle with him. But at the end of the exhibition he was thrown in the way of a leopard; and so much blood gushed out at one of his bites, that the spectators ridiculed him, as being *baptised with blood*. However, not being quite killed, he had the presence of mind; when the animal was withdrawn, to speak to Pudens the gaoler, desiring him to be mindful of his faith, and not to be disheartened, but encouraged, by his sufferings. He even took a ring from his finger, and dipping it in one of his wounds, gave it to him as a pledge.

Perpetua and Felicitas were first inclosed in nets, and then exposed to a wild cow. But this sight struck the spectators with horror, as the former was a delicate woman, and the breasts of the latter were streaming with milk after her delivery.

They were therefore recalled and exposed in a common loose dress. Perpetua was first tossed by the beast, and being thrown down, she had the attention to compose her dress as she lay on the ground. Then rising, and seeing Felicitas much more torn than herself, she gave her her hand, and assisted her to rise; and for some time they both stood together, near the gate of the amphitheatre. Thither

Perpetua



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Perpetua sent for her brother, who was a catechumen, and exhorted him to continue firm in the faith, to love his fellow-christians, and not be discouraged by her sufferings.

Being all in a mangled condition, they were taken to the usual place of execution, to be dispatched with a sword; but the populace requesting that they should be removed to another place, where the execution might be seen to more advantage, they got up of their own accord to go thither. Then, having kissed one another, they quietly resigned themselves to their fate. In walking, Saturus had supported Perpetua, and he expired the first. She was ordered to direct a young and ignorant soldier, who was appointed to be her executioner, in what manner he should perform his office.

S. E. O.

## SECTION III.

*Of the Controversy concerning Easter.*

**C**OMPARED with the scenes which I shall be obliged to bring before my readers in some subsequent periods of this history, the controversies among christians within this period were few, and conducted with great moderation; though, on one occasion, and that indeed a very slight one, we have a lamentable instance of unjustifiable violence in one christian bishop.

The only festival that we find any mention of in the scriptures (if, indeed, that was considered as a festival in the earliest times) was the *Lord's day*, observed in commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection, and which the Gentile christians observed for the purpose of their assemblies for public worship, as the Jews did their sabbath. It is evident, however, that very soon after, if not before, the death of the apostles, for the same reason that the christians had observed a weekly commemoration of the resurrection, they fell into the custom of holding a greater annual one. This was certainly natural; and except that one observance leads to others, and this without end (so that it is best upon  
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the whole to keep to some definite rule, as that of the scriptures) they who introduced and followed this practice of observing Easter cannot be blamed.

Very soon, however, christians in different places fell into a custom of observing Easter on different days, some in the East on the day of the Jewish passover, or the fourteenth of the month Nisan, on whatever day of the week it might happen to be ; and those in the West on the Sunday following it, because it was on a Sunday that Christ rose from the dead. It had also been the custom to set apart some time for the purpose of *fasting* before this great festival, in commemoration of the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ, which had preceded his resurrection.

Unhappily, it was, from very early times, thought highly expedient, in order to preserve the *unity of the church*, that the opinions and practices of all christians should be the same ; and therefore when this difference came to be noticed, endeavours were used to promote an uniformity with respect to it. With this view, Polycarp, who, according to Irenæus, had been used to observe the fourteenth day of the month, together with the apostle John, whose disciple he had been, made a journey to Rome, on purpose to confer with Anicetus on the subject. In this conference each of these bishops maintained his own opinion, and, notwithstanding what was alleged by the other, determined to ad-  
here

here to his former practice; but they agreed that such a difference as this should not break the communion between the different parts of the church of Christ; and to show his charity, Anicetus desired Polycarp to officiate for him at the celebration of the Lord's supper, which he did, and they parted with mutual goodwill.

In this state things continued till the reign of Commodus; when, superstition increasing, more stress was laid upon ritual observances than in former times; and a season of peace giving the christians more leisure to attend to the differences among themselves, more offence was taken by christian societies at practices which differed from their own. To heal these differences, synods, or councils, were held both in the East and in the West. Those which decided in favour of celebrating Easter on Sunday were the following: two in Palestine, in one of which Theophilus, bishop of Cæsarea, and in the other Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem presided; one in Pontus, in which Palma, an old bishop, presided; one of the churches of Osdroene, and its neighbourhood; one in Rome, where Victor presided; and another of the churches in Gaul, in which Irenæus presided; Bacchylus also, bishop of Conon, published a letter in favour of this decision.

But the bishops of Asia proper, in a synod which was convened on this occasion, decided in  
favour

favour of the fourteenth day of the month; and Polycrates, who had presided in it, wrote a letter in the name of his brethren, to Victor, bishop of Rome, in which he gave him their reasons for adhering to the custom of their ancestors; derived from the apostle John; adding that, notwithstanding the general decision in favour of a different practice, they thought it their duty to obey God rather than man.

Victor, who was a man of a violent temper, on receiving this letter, would have declared by a solemn sentence, all the bishops of Asia cut off from the communion of the catholic church, and of course declared heretics. But this violence was far from being agreeable to those bishops who held the same opinion with himself; and among them Irenæus wrote an excellent letter upon the subject, expostulating with him on the unreasonableness of breaking the communion of the christian church for such a trifle as this; alleging that there were other differences among them as great as this, but yet such as might be allowed without any breach of christian friendship. They differed, he said, about the preceding *fast*, as well as about the day of the feast; some fasting one day, others two, and others more; and some just forty hours (for that is the most probable sense of the passage) differences which arose in the time of their ancestors; and he concludes with an account of the friendly conference

ence between Polycarp and Anicetus upon the subject. Irenæus wrote also to other bishops as well as to Victor, to the same purpose.

This controversy ended for the present, as most others have done, each party, for a time, being confirmed in his own opinion and practice. At the council of Nice we shall find the present rule for observing Easter-day on the Sunday made absolute, with respect to all the christian world\*.

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## SECTION IV.

*Of the Gnostics within this Period.*

THE most considerable of the Gnostics within this period were the Marcionites, who were much divided among themselves. Rhodon, the disciple of Tatian gives an account of a conference which he had with a Marcionite of the name of Apelles, whom he acknowledges to have been very respectable, both for his years, and his virtue. He owned one principle of all things, whereas

Marcion

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 23, 24, p. 241, &c.

Marcion and some others held that there were two original principles, and some said there were three. He said, however, that the prophets were inspired by an evil being.

According to Rhodon, Apelles was not a very zealous Gnostic; for he held that every person should continue in the faith in which he was educated, and that the catholics might be saved, if they had good works. He also acknowledged that, though he was a believer in one principle, and could not resist the conviction of there being no more than one, he was not able to prove this by strict demonstration. For this Rhodon derided him; and yet they who believe in the unity of God on the principles of the light of nature only, are not able to advance any thing more in favour of it, than Rhodon might have done for his *one principle*, which was, in reality, the same thing\*.

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v. Cap. 13. p. 225.

## SECTION V.

*Of the Unitarians within this Period.*

EUSEBIUS introduces an article relating to the Ebionites under the reign of Trajan, which will equally apply to this period. In this chapter he shews himself most violently hostile to them, on account of all of them holding the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, though some of them admitted his miraculous conception. None of them, he says, would admit that he was the *logos*, or the wisdom of the Father. The appellation of *Ebionites*, which signifies *poor*, he says, they got from their mean opinion concerning Christ ; but it is much more probable that it was a name imposed upon them by the unbelieving Jews, either on account of the poverty of the greater part of them, or from the contempt in which they held them. “ An evil dæmon,” he says, “ has drawn them aside thus far from the faith, though he was not able to draw them from the  
“ faith



“faith altogether. They were,” he says, “rigid observers of the law of Moses, they rejected the epistles of Paul, calling him a deserter of the law, they made use of the gospel according to the Hebrews only, and observed both their own sabbath and the christian Lord’s-day\*.”

In this period Eusebius gives an account of a person who, in the reign of Severus, wrote against the heresy, as he calls it, of Artemon, who lived in the reign of Commodus, A. D. 185. In this treatise, which is supposed to have been written by Caius, a presbyter of Rome, and to have been called *the little Labyrinth*, the opinion of the simple humanity of Christ was censured as novel, though the writer of it says, that they who held it maintained that it was the oldest doctrine of all, even that of the apostles themselves, and that it continued to be the prevailing opinion till the time of Victor, about A. D. 190, but that in the time of his successor, Zephyrinus, it began to be corrupted.

It is something remarkable that we have no account of any treatise written against the unitarian doctrine before this, which was about twenty years after Artemon, from which circumstance it may be clearly inferred, that till this time this doctrine had not given much offence; and yet that it had existed before, and was even generally prevalent, is

\* Euseb. Hist, Lib. iii. Cap. 27. p. 122.

undeniable. It was so well known to have been so in the time of the ancient christian writers, that, in order to account for it, they unanimously acknowledged that the doctrines of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ. had not been taught with clearness and effect by the apostles, and other early preachers of the gospel, lest it should stagger their hearers, and especially those of the Jewish nation ; and the apostle John they said was the first who clearly explained it, in the first verses of his gospel ; which, according to them, was published almost twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem. And yet there is no evidence of any change being produced in the opinion of the christian world by this gospel, no account of any other writings of that period to enforce the new doctrine of John, and nothing written in opposition to it ; so that it is very evident that no such doctrine was at that time understood to be published by him ; and therefore the hypothesis of these christian fathers is destitute of all probability. The fact, however, which they acknowledge, of the universality of unitarianism at the time of the publication of John's gospel must remain undeniable.

What the unitarians of this age alleged was highly probable. Justin Martyr published the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, as the logos of the Father, about A. D. 140 ; and between that time and that of this writer, about seventy years had

had elapsed, so that it is probable that the majority of the learned bishops might now have adopted it, but not much before ; and it was still reprobated with great indignation by the majority of the common people, who justly thought that it infringed upon the great doctrine of the *monarchy*, or sole divinity, of God the Father. This is so evident from a passage of Tertullian, a writer within the period of which I am treating, and who was himself a trinitarian (so that his acknowledgment must have been made with reluctance) that I shall recite the passage. "The simple," he says\*, "the ignorant and unlearned, who are always the greater part of the body of christians ; since the rule of faith" [the apostles creed] "transfers the worship of many gods to the one true God ; not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained with the *oeconomy*, dread [*expavescunt*] this *oeconomy* ; imagining that this number and disposition of a trinity, is a division of the unity. They therefore will have it that we are worshippers of two, and even of three gods, but that they are the worshippers of one God only. We, they say, hold the monarchy. Even the Latins, and the most ignorant among them, have learned to haul out for the *monarchy*, as if they understood that Greek word ; and the Greeks themselves will not understand the *oeconomy*." This

\* Ad Praxeam, Sec. 3, p. 502.

This is the language of strong feeling and complaint, and gives us the clearest idea of the state of this opinion in the period of which I am now treating; clearly proving that unitarianism was the doctrine of the common people, and that many of the learned were much displeased at it.

Eusebius, to prove that the unitarian doctrine was not so ancient as the unitarians themselves pretended, alleges the writings of ancient christians, but among these he mentions none older than Justin Martyr. He vindicates Victor from the charge of holding the unitarian doctrine, on account of his having excommunicated Theodotus, who professed it. But in my *History of Early Opinions concerning Christ*,\* I have shewn that it is far from being evident that Theodotus was excommunicated as an unitarian, especially as it is asserted by the writer of the Appendix to Tertullian's treatise, *De Præscriptione*, that Victor was a favourer of the unitarian doctrine, as the unitarians themselves asserted.

With respect to this writer against the unitarians, viz. Caius, who asserted the novelty of their opinion, what Eusebius says concerning him will not add to his credit with men of sense. He says that one Natalis was hired for a certain stipend, by two unitarians, disciples of Theodotus, to be a bishop of their church; that after this he was often  
reproved

reproved by Christ in a dream ; but neglecting this admonition from his love of honour and gain, he was grievously beaten and wounded by angels a whole night through ; that rising early in the morning he went in sackcloth and ashes, and with tears, to Zephyrinus, throwing himself at his feet, and at those of the laity, so as to move the whole church to compassion. By these marks of contrition, and shewing his wounds, he was, though with difficulty, restored to the communion of the church. A fact like this, says the writer, would have brought the Sodomites to repentance.

This writer then proceeds to charge the unitarians with not troubling themselves about the doctrine of the scriptures ; but with having recourse to syllogisms, and geometry, busying themselves about terrestrial things, ignorant of him who comes from heaven. Some of them, he says, study Euclid's geometry, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Galen. He adds, that they adulterate the scriptures, and publish copies of them different from one another, that they either deny the inspiration of the scriptures, and are therefore infidels, or pretend to be wiser than the holy Spirit, and therefore are possessed by dæmons. Some of them, however, he allows, did not adulterate the scriptures, but he says, they rejected the law and the prophets all together ; and for the sake of a lawless and atheistical doctrine, on the pretence of grace, they rolled  
down

down into the deepest gulph of perdition\*. What credit can be given to a man who can rail in this manner, or to the historian who can quote such things with approbation. Honest and worthy as Eusebius might be in other respects, we must, after this, pronounce him to be a man not to be trusted when he writes concerning unitarians.

In this period Eusebius gives an account of another unitarian, viz. Beryllus, bishop of Bostra, in Arabia, who flourished A. D. 230. He is said to have maintained that the divinity in Christ was not his own, but his Father's. A synod was called upon the subject, in which Origen is said to have convinced him of his error. The acts of this synod were extant in the time of Eusebius, with the questions proposed by Origen, and all that passed on the occasion.† It is much to be wished that they were extant now.

At the same time, says Eusebius, some christians in Arabia held the doctrine of the soul dying with the body, and rising together with it at the resurrection; that a synod was called on this account also, and that Origen, attending again, induced those who held that opinion to abandon it‡. These are marks of primitive christianity, unadulterated by that heathen philosophy to which Origen

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v. Cap. 28. p. 251.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 33, p. 297.

‡ Ibid. Lib. vi. Cap. 37. p. 299.

Origen was unhappily too much attached. It is not, however, to be wondered at, if his ingenuity and eloquence should puzzle and silence plain men.

To this Eusebius subjoins an account of the heresy of the *Elcesaites*, which, he says, was extinguished almost as soon as it arose. They seem upon the whole to have been Jewish Gnostics, but the account of them is very imperfect and obscure\*.

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## SECTION VI.

*Of the Growth of Superstition within this Period.*

BY the writings of Tertullian we are able to point out the great progress which superstition had made among christians in this early period, especially with respect to baptism and the Lord's supper; the application of the elements of them being considered not merely as expressive of sentiments of the heart, but as being themselves of a fa-

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 38. p. 300.

cred nature, and having a real purifying virtue, such as was ascribed to simlar things in the religion of the heathens. Christians also considered the Lord's-day with a kind of respect which cannot be pronounced free from superstition, and the use which they made of the sign of the cross is certainly deserving of the same censure. As the passage is remarkable and instructive, I shall give it entire from that treatise of his in which he defended the conduct of the foldier who refused to wear a crown in a triumphal procession, as mentioned above. His object is to shew that many practices are sufficiently authorized by tradition, without the authority of scripture.

Beginning with baptism, he says, " Before we  
" go to the water we declare in the church, before  
" the bishop, that we renounce the devil, his pomp,  
" and his ministers. We are then dipped three  
" times, saying more than our Lord in the gospel  
" prescribed. We then taste of milk and honey,  
" and from that day abstain from our usual wash-  
" ings a whole week. We take the sacrament of  
" the Lord's supper, both at the usual time of eat-  
" ing and also in those assemblies which are held  
" before day-break, nor do we take the elements  
from any other hands than those of the clergy. We  
" annually make oblations for the dead, as in com-  
" memoration of the day of their proper birth"

[meaning



[meaning their martyrdom]. " We think it  
 " wrong to fast, or to kneel on the Lord's-day, or  
 " in all the interval from Easter to Pentecost. We  
 " are anxious lest any part of the sacramental bread  
 " or wine fall to the ground. We sign ourselves  
 " with the sign of the cross in the forehead, when-  
 " ever we go from home or return, when we put  
 " on our clothes or our shoes, when we go to  
 " the bath, or sit down to meat, when we light our  
 " candles, when we lie down, and when we sit."  
 For all these observances, he says, we have no  
 rule besides tradition\*. It was, indeed, a great  
 deal that christians had learned of this new master  
 in so short a time. We shall see, however, that  
 they took many other lessons of the same kind af-  
 terwards.

\* De Corona, Sec. iii. p. 101.

## SECTION VII.

*Of the Writers within this Period.*

**B**Y the writers of any period it will be easy to form an idea of the subjects which engaged the attention of mankind in the course of it. I shall therefore always close the account of every considerable division of this history with a brief account of them; and while Eusebius is my principal guide, I shall adhere pretty nearly to the order in which he places them.

Apollonius, who was forty years old when Montanus published his prophecies, wrote against him, and his celebrated followers, Priscilla and Maximilla. He was replied to by Tertullian\*.

Theophilus, bishop of Cæsarea, wrote a synodical epistle against those who celebrated Easter at the same time with the Jews†. On the same subject Bacchyllus, bishop of Corinth, wrote an elegant treatise, in the name of all the bishops of Achaia‡. Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, wrote  
in

\* Lib. v. Cap. 18. p. 235. Jerom Catalogues, Cap. 51.

† Ibid. Cap. 54.

‡ Ibid. Cap. 55

in defence of the Jewish time of celebrating Easter, against Victor, bishop of Rome, who also had written on the same subject\*.

Pantænus was a Sicilian, who had been a Stoic philosopher. He presided over the school of Alexandria, which had been long established for instruction in sacred literature, and was kept up till the time of Eusebius. But he quitted this school to go on a mission to preach the gospel in India, where he found the disciples of the apostle Bartholomew, as was mentioned before. Returning from this mission, he resumed his care of the Alexandrian school, and wrote some commentaries on the scriptures, which are now lost†.

Clemens of Alexandria was educated under Pantænus, and succeeded him in his school. He wrote a miscellaneous work, called *Stromata*, in which he treats of the true principles of knowledge, and which contains many things against the Gnostics. But when he wrote his *Institutions*, a work now lost, but of which an account is preserved by Photius, he must have been a Gnostic himself, as it contains many Gnostic opinions. He also wrote against the errors of the Jews, a treatise on Easter, and some other moral tracts, which are now lost. But besides his *Stromata*, we have his exhortation

\* Jerom Catalogus, Cap. 45. 56.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. v. Cap. 10. p. 222.

tation to the Gentiles, and a small piece on the salvation of the rich.\*

Of the writers who flourished in the time of Commodus Eusebius just mentions the following : Heraclitus's (by Jerom called Héraclius) commentaries on the apostle, meaning Paul ; Maximus and Apion on the origin of evil, and concerning matter ; Candidus on the work of the six days ; and Sextus on the resurrection. Eusebius says, in the same place, that there were many other writings, the titles of which he did not know, and and many of them were anonymoust. About the same time Brabianus wrote some small pieces on subjects of christianity†.

Judas wrote on the book of Revelation in the time of Severus, and judged, from the severity of his perlecution, that antichrist would soon appear§.

Serapion, bishop of Antioch, in the first year of Caracalla, wrote several things which Eusebius had not seen ; but he mentions a letter of his to Domninus, who in the time of persecution had embraced the Jewish religion, some other epistles, the

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v, Cap. 11, p. 223. Lib. vi, Cap. 6. p. 264. Ibid. Cap. 13, p. 271.

† Ibid. Lib. v. Cap. 27. p. 251.

‡ Jerom Catalogus, Cap. 62.

§ Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 7. p. 264.

the subjects of which he does not mention, and a treatise on the gospel of Peter, shewing the falsity of it, as containing some things favourable to Gnosticism\*.

Hippolytus, probably a bishop in Arabia, wrote on Easter, the work of the six days, the works which followed the six days, against Marcion, on Solomon's Song, on a chapter in Ezekiel, against all heresies, and other treatises which Eusebius had not seen†.

Caius, a presbyter of the church of Rome, wrote against Proclus, a defender of the Montanists. He condemned the rashness of some persons in compiling the books of scripture, and reckoned only thirteen epistles of Paul, {omitting that to the Hebrews‡. He is also thought to have been the author of the treatise, intitled the *little Labyrinth* against Artemon, of which an account has been given; and Photius ascribes to him a treatise *on the universe*, which went under the name of Josephus.

Beryllus, Bishop of Boßra, the same whom Origen is said to have convinced of his error relating to the simple humanity of Christ, was the author, Eusebius says, of several elegant works, the subjects

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. v. Cap. 13. p. 236. Lib. vi. Cap. 12. p. 270.

† Ibid. Lib. vi. Cap. 22, p. 286.

‡ Ibid. Lib. vi. Cap. 20. p. 285.

subjects of which he does not mention\*. Some of them, it is probable, contained his opinion concerning Christ.

Julius Africanus, of Palestine, wrote an epistle to Origen, to prove the spuriousness of the history of Susanna, and a book on the differences between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke ; but his principal work was on the chronology of the world to the time of Heliogabalus. We have almost the whole of this in Eusebius's *Chronicon*†.

Tertullian, a native of Carthage, and the oldest of the Latin Fathers, was the author of a great number of works, many of which are come down to us, and he was famous for turning Montanist after he had written several of them. Those that are now extant are supposed by Dupin to have been composed in the following order ; of penance, of baptism, of prayer, an apology for the christian religion, concerning patience, and an exhortation to the martyrs. These were written before he was a Montanist. When he appears to have been inclined to that sect, he wrote his treatises concerning public spectacles, of idolatry, of the ornaments and dress of women, two books addressed to his wife, and a treatise on the soul. After he was a Montanist, he wrote his books against Marcion, of prescription, of the flesh of Christ, of the

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi Cap. 20, p. 284.

† Ibid. Lib. vi, Cap. 31, p. 295.

the resurrection of the flesh, Scorpicus (against heresies) of the crown, of the pallium, and against the Jews. He also wrote in this period of his life against Praxeas, the unitarian Montanist, against Hermogenes who held some Gnostic opinions; and against the Valentinians; his treatise of chastity, of fasting, of monogomy, an exhortation to chastity, of flight in time of persecution, a treatise to shew that virgins ought to be veiled, and a letter to Scapula the pro consul of Africa relating to his persecution of christians mentioned before. Several other treatises pass for his which were not written by him.

Ammonius, the master of Origen in philosophy, wrote a treatise on the agreement between Moses and Christ, which is now lost, and the harmony of the four gospels, which is thought by some to be that which is now contained in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*. Eusebius warmly defends his being a christian against Porphyry\*.

The most distinguished character, and writer, in this period was Origen, a native of Egypt, surnamed *Adamantinus*, from his incredible labours. For besides his public teaching, which was incessant, he is said by some to have written six thousand volumes, but many of them were probably letters or very small tracts. The catalogue of them, says Eusebius, would be a book of itself. The

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 19, p. 280.

† Ibid. Lib. vi, Cap. 32, p. 296.

character of Origen was so great, that it was commonly said of him, that his life was worthy of his eloquence, and his eloquence of his life\*. Porphyry, the Heathen philosopher, who wrote against christianity, speaks of his having known Origen, and commends him highly†, though he charges him with mixing Greek ideas with his christianity, and continually studying Plato. He also says that he borrowed his allegorical method of interpreting scripture from Pythagoras‡.

As the history of Origen is written much at large by Eusebius (though he professes to abridge it) and he was a man so remarkable for his piety, genius, and application, I shall give the outlines of it. His enemy, Jerom, allowed that he was a great man from his infancy. He was indeed an honour to christianity, and to human nature. His father Leonidas gave him a pious and learned education, and his early improvements were such as gave his worthy parent the greatest satisfaction. Though he was not more than seventeen years of age when the persecution under Severus began in Alexandria, and his father was apprehended and confined, he would, at that early age, have thrown himself in the way of the persecutors, if his mother,

after

\* Euseb. Lib. vi, Cap. 3, p. 261.

† Ibid. Lib. vi, Cap. 19, p. 280.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 19, p. 282.



after her most earnest entreaties had failed, had not hid his cloaths, in order to prevent him going abroad\*. He wrote, however, to his father, exhorting him to persevere in his profession at all events, and without concerning himself about his family, though in case of his death, there would be a widow and seven children left in great poverty; and, thus encouraged, his father was beheaded, and behaved with becoming resolution.

A large family being left in this destitute condition, a rich lady of Alexandria, a friend of virtue and genius, took Origen into her family. At the same time she entertained a distinguished Gnostic of Antioch, and her house was the resort of other men of letters. In this situation, though Origen could not refrain from the society of this Gnostic, he was so steady to his principles, that he would never join with him in prayer, but strictly adhered to the communion of the catholic church.

Not chusing to be unnecessarily burthensome to his benefactors, and having made considerable proficiency in literature, he was soon able to maintain himself by teaching grammar†. But the great school of Alexandria being deserted by its master in time of persecution, many persons applied to him for instruction in the principles of religion, though

\* Euseb. Lib. vi, Cap. 2, p. 258.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 2, p. 259.

though he was not more than eighteen years old ; and as many were by him brought over to christianity, he was at that early age appointed catechist by Demetrius the bishop of Alexandria. On this he discontinued the teaching of grammar, and he was so devoted to sacred literature, that he even sold all his books of profane science, receiving the small sum of four oboli a day from the person who purchased them\*.

While he was in this employment, many of his pupils became martyrs : and being in so conspicuous a station, it was with great difficulty that he himself escaped. Being now obliged to instruct women as well as men, and forming to himself a plan of great austerity of manners, in a fit of enthusiastic zeal, he made a literal application to himself of that precept of our Saviour concerning persons making themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake ; an action for which in the sober reflections of his after life, he greatly condemned himself†.

Applying himself with singular assiduity to the duties of his office as catechist, he greatly encreased his reputation, especially by an edition of the scriptures of the Old Testament, with all the different Greek versions, in separate columns. He was induced, however, for what reason does not appear (but

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 3, p. 261.

† Ibid. Lib. vi. Cap. 8, p 264.

(but it was no doubt sufficiently urgent) to quit his employment and his studies for the purpose of making a visit to Rome, in the time of Zephyrinus. Returning very soon to Alexandria, many persons of learning, from distant places, resorted to him; and the bishop of Alexandria being applied to by an Arabian prince for a person to instruct him in the christian faith, he made choice of Origen, in preference to any other\*.

When Alexandria was ravaged by Caracalla, he went to Cæsarea in Palestine, and there the bishop engaged him to expound the scriptures publicly in his church, though he was not then even a priest. This gave some offence to Demetrius, who insisted on his returning to his proper charge at Alexandria, which accordingly he did†. He made, however, two other excursions, one at the request of the empress Mammæa, who sent for him to Antioch‡, and the other to Achaia, in his way to which he was ordained priest at Cæsarea§. This gave such offence to Demetrius that from this time he did every thing in his power to injure him, particularly by exposing the rash action mentioned above; though, when it was communicated to him in confidence, he had promised never to divulge it, and

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 19 p. 282.

† Ibid. p. 284.

‡ Ibid. p. 296.

§ Ibid. Cap. 23. p. 287.

and at that time did not condemn him for it, but encouraged him to apply with vigour to the duties of his profession.

At first Demetrius got him banished from Alexandria, in a council held A. D. 231, though on what pretence does not distinctly appear. In a second council he was deposed from the priesthood, and excommunicated; and the sentence was of course ratified by distant churches. Still, however, he was received at Cæsarea by Theodotus bishop of that city, and by Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, who were in an extraordinary manner attached to him, and undertook to defend him\*. While he resided at Cæsarea persons flocked to him for instruction from great distances, and among others Gregory, afterwards bishop of Neocæsarea, and his brother Athenodorus, whom he persuaded to abandon profane literature for the study of theology. They attended his lectures five years. Firmilian also bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, a distinguished character in his time, was so fond of Origen, that he would have persuaded him to go into his province, and live with him†.

In this situation he composed his commentaries on the scriptures, dictating, it is said, to seven notaries, and sometimes more, and employing as many scribes to take fair copies, the expence of which

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 27. p. 292.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 27. p. 292.

which was cheerfully defrayed by Ambrosius, who had been converted by him to the catholic doctrine from being a Valentinian\*. When he was turned sixty, he permitted scribes to copy after him as he delivered his discourses to the people which he had not done before. It was in this period of his life that he wrote his excellent books against Celsus, in defence of christianity†.

In the persecution under Maximin, Origen concealed himself by retiring to Athens. There, however, he was not idle, but continued to write commentaries. After this he returned to Cæsarea, and then spent sometime with Firmillian in Cappadocia. In the reign of Gordian he attended the Synod in Arabia against Beryllus, and in the reign of Phillip the other synod in Arabia in which the question concerning the state of the soul was discussed. In the persecution under Decius we shall see that he suffered torture with great fortitude; but surviving it, he died a natural death in the beginning of the reign of Gallus.

Besides commentaries on many parts of scripture, we have of Origen his books against Celsus, a treatise on prayer, *Philosophumena* (which was probably the first of his books against heresy) his treatise on *principles* in the Latin of Ruffinus, and *Philocalia*, or extracts from his commentaries on  
obscure

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib vi, Cap. 18, p. 278.

† Ibid. Cap. 36, p. 299.

obscure passages of scripture by Basil and Gregory Nazianzen.

Ambrose, the great friend of Origen, mentioned in the preceding account of him, wrote epistles addressed to him. Tryphon, also, a hearer of Origen, wrote letters addressed to him, and other small pieces, especially a treatise on the subject of the red heifer in the book of Numbers, and on Abraham's dividing the dove and the turtle\*.

Minutius Felix a lawyer at Rome, wrote a dialogue now extant, intitled, *Octavius* against the heathen religion. Another treatise on fate, or against the mathematicians, passed for his in the time of Jerom, but he thought the stile not worthy of him†.

Alexander, bishop of Cappadocia, and afterwards of Jerusalem, and who suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Decius, wrote several epistles, but it does not appear that any of them were on subjects of much importance‡.

Lastly, Jerom says that Geminus, a presbyter of Antioch, left a few monuments of his genius; but he does not say what they were§.

\* Jerom, Cap. 67. 68.

† Ibid. Cap. 69.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 20. p. 284. Jerom, Cap. 73,

§ Jerom, Cap. 75.

FROM THE REIGN OF DECIUS, A. D. 249, TO  
THAT OF DIOCLETIAN, A. D. 284.

**S. E. C. E. I. G. N. I.**

*Of the Persecution by Decius.*

**I**N the period of which I have been treating the christians had enjoyed a great share of repose, which had been favourable to the increase of their numbers, but by no means to their interior discipline, or their morals. Cyprian and other writers make great complaints with respect to the covetousness, pride, luxury, and worldly mindedness of christians, even of the clergy and confessors. Many also made no scruple of connecting themselves by marriage with heathens, which showed a great decline of zeal for their christian profession.

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\* Cyprian, *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, Opera, p. 119, and *De lapsis*, p. 123.

It pleased the divine Being however, to rouse the christian world from this state of indifference by a more severe and extensive persecution than any of the preceeding, in the reign of Decius, though it does not appear to have continued quite three years.

Decius was made emperor by the army, which had revolted against Philip, and perhaps, because his predecessor had favoured the christians (together with such other reasons as had influenced Trajan and Marcus Antoninus) he determined, if possible, to extirpate them; and by appointing proper governors of provinces, and giving them suitable instructions, he took the most effectual method to gain his end; directing them (as may be collected from the manner in which this persecution was conducted) to use every means in their power to bring the people back to the profession of their ancient religion, leaving the mode of proceeding, and the kind of punishment, to their discretion\*. From an expression of Cyprian in his epistle to Antoninus [*Tyrannus infestus sacerdotibus dei*] it should seem that the violence of the persecution was more particularly directed against the christian clergy,† but this would naturally be thought the most effectual

\* Gregorii Nyssen De Vita, Greg. Thaum. Opera, Vol. i. p. 999.

† Epist. 55. Opera, p. 104.



effectual method of extirpating christianity, which the emperor had in view.

Before I relate what happened in consequence of the sanguinary edicts of this emperor, I shall give an account of some horrid cruelties which were exercised upon the christians in Alexandria, in the year preceding the reign of Decius, viz. A. D. 248. It shews how subject the christians were to grievous persecution, independently of the intentions of the emperors. And as we should not have had any knowledge of this persecution in Egypt, but by means of a letter of Dionysius the bishop, preserved in Eusebius, it is probable that many cruelties of a similar nature were committed in other parts of the Roman empire, though they are now buried in oblivion.

Some time before any open violences were committed, a poet, whose name is not mentioned, had been busy in stirring up the mob against the christians, and inflaming their zeal for their ancient superstitions. Headed by this man they set no bounds to their outrages, but acted as if the service of their gods had consisted in the murder of the christians. The first object of their vengeance was an old man of the name of Metras, who refusing to pronounce certain words, which it was known christians would not do, they first beat him with clubs, then thrust reeds into his face and eyes, and at last stoned him to death. After this they  
drag-

dragged a christian woman, of the name of Quirita, into an idol temple ; and when she refused to perform the rites of it, they tied her feet together, and dragged her through the streets, which were paved with rough stones, and against mill stones &c. They then scourged her, and taking her into the suburbs, they stoned her to death.

After this they rushed into the houses of the christians with whom they were acquainted ; and driving them out, they plundered their goods. What was of most value they carried away, but things of wood, and of less value, they broke in pieces, or burned in the streets, so as to exhibit the appearance of a city taken and plundered by the enemy. In this tumult the christians fled, *receiving with joy, our author says, the spoiling of their goods\**, and hitherto not more than one person who fell into the hands of the mob was induced to renounce his profession.

They then seized upon a single woman of advanced age, named Apollonia, and striking her on the face they beat out her teeth. Then lighting a pile without the city, they threatened to burn her alive unless she would pronounce certain words which they dictated to her. At first she seemed to parley with them, but, fearing perhaps more ill usage, she of her own accord rushed into the fire, and was burned. Having seized one Serapio in

\* Heb. x. 34.

his own house, they tortured him in a cruel manner, and having broken his bones they threw him headlong out of his chamber. In short, no christian could appear in any public road or private path, the populace being every where clamorous to have all persons seized, and thrown into the flames, who would not pronounce their words. At length the christians got some respite by the furious populace quarrelling among themselves, and exercising the same cruelties upon one another which they had done upon them.

This was a little before the dreadful edicts of Decius, which when they arrived, filled all the christians in Egypt with the greatest consternation. On the publication of them many persons of the higher ranks in life obeyed without hesitation; some, who were in office, doing first themselves what they were appointed to require of others. Some were brought by their heathen friends and relations, and being called upon by name, joined in the sacrifice, though many of them did it with manifest reluctance, so as to be laughed at by the bystanders, but others boldly declared that they never had been christians. Of the rest, some fled, and others were apprehended. Of these some persisted in their profession of christianity, till they were confined only, and others till they were threatened with torture; but there were many on whom no threats could make any impression.

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The first of these was Julianus, who was so afflicted with the gout that he could neither walk nor stand, and two men who carried him. Of these two one recanted, but the other, together with his master, persisting in acknowledging themselves to be christians, were set on camels, and in that situation beaten through all the city, and then thrown into the fire, and consumed, in the presence of the whole multitude. A soldier called Basas, who attended at the execution, checking those who abused them, was by the clamour of the people brought before the tribunal, and appearing to be a christian he was beheaded. Maçar a native of Lybia, after resisting all attempts to make him renounce his profession, was sentenced to be burned alive.

After these Epimachus and Alexander, when they had long borne the horrors of a prison, and had been tortured with iron forceps, and many other ways, were burned in a lime-kiln. Four women perished in the same manner. Ammonarion, an unmarried woman, being tortured a long time in the presence of the judge, and saying that nothing they could do to her would make her pronounce what they required, was ordered for execution. Marcuria a venerable old woman, and Dionysia, the mother of many children, and who had brought them all up in the profession of christianity,

ty, and also another Ammoniarion, were then brought before the prefect; and being ashamed of having tortured women to no purpose, he ordered them to be beheaded without any previous suffering.

Then Heron, and Ater, and Isidorus, all Egyptians, were brought before the judge, together with Dioscurus, a boy about fifteen years old. The men, having borne flagellation with great fortitude, were thrown into the fire; but the judge, having compassion on the boy, who distinguished himself by the pertinence of his answers to all that was said to him, and finding that neither his intreaties nor his tortures had any effect upon him, dismissed him.

One Nemesion, who had been falsely accused as one of a set of banditti, proving his innocence of that charge, but acknowledging that he was a christian, was tortured twice as much as any of them. At length Ammon, Zeno, Ptolemy, and Ingenius, together with an old man called Theophilus, all soldiers, who had attended these trials and executions, after shewing by their looks and gestures their displeasure at any who denied their faith, before they were apprehended or accused, went of their own accord to the tribunal, and acknowledged that they also were christians. On this the prefect and his assistants were alarmed, and not

not choosing to proceed any farther, permitted them to go away in triumph\*; the same sort of story is told of many others, says Dionysius, were destroyed by the heathens in other towns and villages, of which he gives the following example. One Christian, had been hired by some person in office to do his duty for him, and being in consequence of it ordered by his employer to subscribe to the idols; and refusing, he was still reproached, and persisting in his refusal, he was abused in a great variety of ways; but bearing all with wonderful patience, he was at last put to death by a large stake being driven through his body. Multitudes, he says, being driven into the mountains and desert parts of the country, perished with hunger and thirst, cold and disease, and by other such wild deaths, an account of whom was preserved by those who survived. As an instance of this, he mentions the case of Chazaremb, bishop of Nilus, a very old man. He having fled with his wife to a mountain of Arabia, never returned; and though his brethren made diligent search for him, he could never be found, alive or dead. Many others were taken in these mountains by the Saracens, and reduced to slavery; and though some of them recovered their liberty by ransom, others did not. These confessors, Dionysius

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 41, p. 308.

onyfius fays, had great compaffion for thofe who had not been able to bear the perfecution, but had offered facrifice, and afterwards repented of it, which was the cafe with great numbers\*.

What happened to Dionyfius himfelf is not a little extraordinary. The perfon who had been fent by Sabinus, the prefect, to apprehend him, not thinking to look for him in his own houfe, he, who had no thoughts of flying, continued there four days ; but being then, he fays, admonifhed by God to withdraw, and a way being opened for him, he with his fervants, and many of his chriitian friends, went out of the city together. About fun-fet, however, they were all feized by a party of foldiers, and carried to Tapofiris ; but one Timothy, who happened not to be with them, ef-caped.

He going to the houfe of the bifhop, and finding him and his friends fled, and a guard in it, fled alfo in great hafte ; when being met by a perfon out of the country, and being afked by him why he fled, he told the whole ftory ; and this man happening to be going to nuptial feaft, which, according to cuftom, was held in the night, told his companions ; and they instantly ruſhing out, and attacking the guard, refcued Dionyfius and his friends. But he, thinking them to be robbers, and

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 42, p. 309.

being in bed, with only a linen garment on, offered them the remainder of his clothes ; and when, without regarding this, they bid him rise and follow them, he begged they would leave him, or do themselves the office of the soldiers, and cut off his head. They, however, compelled him to go against his will, dragging him away by his hands and feet. On this, the soldiers being dispersed, and he being at his liberty, four of his friends, whose names are mentioned, conducted him out of the village, and placing him on an ass without any saddle, conveyed him to a place of safety\*. Whether he went, he does not say ; but it is supposed that he kept himself concealed till the death of Decius.

At Rome, Fabian the bishop was put to death. In Palestine, Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, mentioned before, a man venerable for his grey hairs, being brought before the tribunal of the president, after having gained great honour by a former testimony, was sent to prison at Cæsarea, and died there. Babylas, bishop of Antioch, also died in prison†.

Origen, who had distinguished himself so much among the christians, and who had been so much noticed by the mother of the late emperor, was particularly aimed at in this persecution, and ap-

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 40, p. 302,

† Ibid. Lib. vi, Cap. 39, p. 301.



prehended ; and though he was then advanced in life, yet shewing an example in himself of that fortitude which he had so early in life, and so often afterwards, recommended to others, he bore a great variety of tortures with invincible fortitude. He was confined in the interior part of the prison, and there fastened with an iron chain, and his feet stretched in the stocks to the fourth hole (which would not have been mentioned by the historian, if it had not been a situation exquisitely painful) for several days. He was also subjected to various other kinds of torture, care being taken that they should not absolutely deprive him of life ; and he was moreover threatened with being burned alive. But neither what he felt, nor what he was farther threatened with at all moved him. That he survived this persecution is certain, but by what means we are not informed. He wrote several letters afterwards, highly edifying to those who should be brought into the same circumstances\*, and he died in the beginning of the following year at the age of seventy†.

We may judge from these few particulars which have been preserved of this persecution, of the sufferings of christians in other parts of the empire. For there can be no doubt of its having been

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 43, p. 316.

† Ibid. Lib. vii, Cap. 1, p. 322.

been a general persecution, as well as a very cruel one. In these circumstances many real believers in christianity would not have the courage to die for the profession of it, and especially to bear torture; and the agony of mind which many of them suffered afterwards moves our compassion, no less than the sufferings of those who had more courage. Dionysius above mentioned relates an affecting instance of this kind.

One Serapion, an old man, whose life and conversation had been unexceptionable, had been induced to sacrifice in the time of persecution, but he enjoyed no peace of mind when it was over, and had never ceased importuning the bishops and clergy for reconciliation, but without effect. Being seized with an illness which he felt to be mortal, he sent his little grandson to a presbyter, to desire him to come to him, as he was then dying. The presbyter was sick and unable to go; but being well informed of the case, and having orders from the bishop to absolve penitents in the article of death, especially if they had sued for absolution some time before, he sent a bit of the eucharistical bread by the boy, as a token of his grandfather being received into the communion of the church; and having received it, he presently and joyfully expired\*.

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 44, p. 317.

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The bishop who relates this, supposed that the life of the old man had been miraculously prolonged till he was reconciled to the church. The story, however, shews the progress of superstition in the minds of christians, with respect to the importance of church communion, and perhaps the sanctifying virtue of the sacramental elements themselves. It is also, no doubt, a specimen of the anxiety of mind of great numbers who were in the same situation, whose faith in the gospel was no less real than that of the martyrs themselves; so that by these alone we are by no means judge of the number of christians in this age.

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## SECTION II.

*From the Accession of Gallus, A. D. 251, to the Reign of Dioclesian, A. D. 284.*

**D**ECIUS, who had taken the surname of Trajan, and whom he imitated in his successful wars, as well as in his persecution of the christians, being slain in a battle with the Goths, who, as some think, were assisted by the treachery of Gallus, was succeeded by him, and then peace was restored to the church, but not entirely. For Dionysius says, that Gallus did not see the faults of his predecessor, but fell into the same himself, persecuting those who prayed for his prosperity, though afterwards the christians were obliged to discontinue those prayers\*.

About this time there broke out a dreadful plague, which, as historians say, lasted ten, or even fifteen years, and made a great destruction among mankind. Dionysius, so often mentioned already, speaks of it as raging in Egypt, so as to exceed the plague in the time of Moses, when there was  
not

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap, 1, p. 322.

not a house in which there was not one dead. The behaviour of the christians to their sick friends in this plague was remarkably different, he says, from that of the heathens. For the christians would not desert those who were seized with it; but continued to render them every kind office in their power, without dread of death; whereas the heathens fled from their sick friends, and left them in the most destitute circumstances\*. On occasion of this plague, Cyprian wrote his treatise on mortality.

Gallus, after reigning not quite two years, was killed by his own soldiers, and succeeded by Æmilian, commander of the army in Pannonia, who had revolted against him; and he being soon dispatched in the same manner, was succeeded by Valerian the lieutenant of Gallus, who associated his son Gallienus in the empire with him. At first no emperor had been more friendly to the christians than Valerian. His house was so full of christians, that it was compared to a church. But at the instigation of Macrian, and the chief of the magicians of Egypt, he began a persecution of the christians, which continued till he was taken prisoner by the Persians\*. At the beginning, however, it seems to have been moderate, as the bishops and clergy were only sent into banishment.

In

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 22, p. 346:

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. vii. Cap. 10, p. 331:

In this persecution Dionysius, in whose letters are preserved so many particulars of the former persecution, was brought before Æmilian, the prefect of Egypt, together with a presbyter, and three of his deacons : and on professing themselves to be christians, they were banished to Cephro, a small village near the deserts of Lybia. There, preaching openly to the people of the place, who were heathens, and who at first had been much enraged against them, they made many converts. On this they were separated, and removed to other places, worse, if possible, than the villages of Lybia. Dionysius himself was ordered to remove to Colluthio, a place which he says, he had never heard of before, but which, he was told, was almost a desert, far from any city, and exposed to robbers.

Persons of both sexes, Dionysius says, and of every age and condition, soldiers and country people, were crowned with martyrdom, some by scourging, some by fire, and some by the sword, though his life was spared. Many christians concealed themselves in the city, in order to assist and comfort their brethren, and take care of the bodies of those who were put to death, which they did at the great hazard of their own lives. Besides killing some outright, others, by the order of the president, were cruelly tortured, and some pined away in fetters and dungeons, where none were permitted

ted to visit them; and he took particular care that his orders were strictly obeyed\*. Faustus was a confessor in this persecution along with Dionysius, but he survived to suffer martyrdom in the time of Dioclesian; and was beheaded when he was very old and infirm†.

It was in this persecution that the famous Cyprian, bishop of Carthage suffered martyrdom. In the reign of Decius he had concealed himself, and in his retirement wrote many letters to the people of his charge, &c. On his return to Carthage; after the persecution, he took a very active part in the question, which was then warmly agitated, concerning the terms on which the lapsell should be admitted into the church, of which a more particular account will be given afterwards.

In the beginning of the persecution, A. D. 257, on the thirtieth of August, Cyprian was cited before Paternus the proconsul, and being required to sacrifice to the gods of the empire, he answered, that he was a christian, and a bishop, and that he knew no other God besides the true one, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is therein, the God to whom christians prayed for the safety of the emperor. Being required to name his presbyters, he said that he should not act the part of an informer. On this he was sent into

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap 11, p. 334:

† Ibid. p. 329.

exile, to a place called Cucurbis, his deacon Pontius accompanying him. About this time, as appears by a letter of Cyprian, many christians suffered in Africa. For one of his letters is directed to nine bishops, who, together with presbyters, deacons, and others, were then in the mines.

Paternus being succeeded by Galerius Maximus, Cyprian was recalled from his banishment and (probably by order of the proconsul) went to his country house, near Carthage, where he continued some time. There being many reports about the orders of the emperor with respect to this persecution, Cyprian, who does not appear to have been under any restraint as to his correspondence, procured an exact account of the state of the fact, which was this. The bishops, presbyters, and deacons were put to death without delay; senators, persons of quality, and Roman knights, were to be deprived of their dignities and goods; and if, after this, they persisted in professing themselves christians, they were to be beheaded; women of rank were to be deprived of their goods, and sent into exile; and lastly, the emperor's freed men were to have their goods confiscated, be sent in chains to his lands in the country, and entered on the list of slaves to work there. Cyprian was also informed, that Xistus, bishop of Rome, had already been put to death there, and that the prefect of the city



city was intent upon executing the emperor's orders.

These orders soon arrived in Africa; and, in consequence of them, Cyprian was again brought before the proconsul, who, on his refusing to sacrifice, spake to him with great anger, calling him an enemy to the gods, and a seducer of the people. After this he pronounced his sentence, which was, that he should be beheaded; and to this Cyprian, with great magnanimity, replied, *God be praised*; and a multitude of christians, who were present, cried aloud, and said, *Let us be beheaded with him*. The sentence was immediately executed after he had been permitted to kneel down and pray, in the presence of a great croud of spectators (many of whom got upon the branches of trees to have a better view) on the fourteenth of September, A. D. 258\*.

In this persecution, as was mentioned before, Xistus, or Sixtus, bishop of Rome, was put to death in the church, together with one Quartus, probably a presbyter†; and Lawrence, a deacon, was roasted before a slow fire, by the order of Marcian the prefect of the city, in the absence of Valerian.

\* This account is extracted from the authentic acts of the martyrdom of Cyprian, translated by Dr. Lardner. *Heathen Testimonies*, Vol. ii. p. 80. and his life by Pontius, prefixed to his works.

† Cypriani Ep. 80. Opera, Epist. p. 238

lerian. Of the latter the following account is given by Leo the Great, in his sermon on the subject of this martyrdom\*. Lawrence was not only a deacon, but almoner of the church of Rome, and it was principally with a view to get possession of the treasures of the church, that he was apprehended. When they were demanded of him, he pointed to a great number of poor persons who had been fed and clothed out of it, so that nothing remained in his hands. The Governor, disappointed in his expectations, required Lawrence to renounce Christ, threatening him, in case of refusal, with the most dreadful torments; and when he appeared unmoved at the mention of some, he proposed others still more excruciating. But nothing being able to move him, he had him first shockingly torn with scourging, and then exposed to the fire on something like a gridiron, and so that different parts of his body were presented to the fire in their turns.

Velerian being taken prisoner, Gallienus his son remained sole emperor, and soon appeared to be a man of moderation, and well disposed towards the christians. By one edict he ordered the clergy to resume their functions, and that those of their possessions, which had been seized should be restored to them, and by another he restored their churches, Gallienus not being much res-

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\* Opera, p. 83.

pected in the empire, his edicts were not every where obeyed, and particular governors were still guilty of great cruelties ; especially as the laws of Trajan had never been formally repealed.

We have, in particular, an account of one Maximus a soldier, who suffered about this time. Being about to obtain the rank of centurion, another soldier, who claimed it as due to himself, accused him of being a christian, and on that account incapable of that honour. Being interrogated by Achaëus his judge, he acknowledged that he was a christian; but the judge being sensibly affected, and very unwilling that he should suffer, gave him three hours, in which he might consider of a more deliberate answer.

Going from the Prætorium, Theotechnus, the bishop of the city, came to him, and after some discourse led him to the church. Then placing him near the altar, and shewing him his own sword, as the instrument of his death, on the one hand, and the scriptures on the other, he bad him chuse which he pleased. Deciding according to the wish of the bishop, he encouraged him to persevere ; and the time being elapsed, he was again brought before the tribunal, and there shewing more constancy than before, and thereupon receiving sentence of death, he was immediately led away and beheaded\*. Asturius a Roman senator, distinguished

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 15, p. 341.

distinguished by his riches as well as his rank, and also by his zeal and courage as a christian, being present at the execution, had the body carried away, and decently buried. Many other things, Eusebius says, were related of this Astur by those who knew him, and who were living in his time\*.

What Gallienus might not have been able to effect, had he been ever so well disposed, in favour of the christian church, was done by the distractions of the empire in his reign; in which those who are called the thirty tyrants were every where making insurrections, and setting up for themselves. In this state of peace the christian church, as usual, greatly encreased, numbers becoming every where more disgusted with the rites of paganism.

The distractions of this time, and the wars between the Romans and the barbarous nations of the North, in this reign, and some that followed, were likewise eminently favourable to the spread of christianity. For when a great number of these northern nations passed from Thrace into Asia committing great devastations, and carrying many people with them into servitude, many of the clergy and other zealous christians were among the captives, and exerted themselves in the conversion of the people among whom they were settled. In consequence of these events we find that, in the tim  
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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii. Cap. 16. p. 342.

of Constantine, the knowledge of christianity was extended to many of these nations, as those beyond the Rhine, the Celtæ, the Goths, and the nations bordering on the Danube\*.

Aurelian, who succeeded Gallienus, appears to have been superstitious ; as he gave orders for consulting the Sybilline books, and reproached the senate with their indifference about that matter, as if, says he, they held their consultations in a christian church, and not in the temple of the gods†. He did not, however, at first take any active part against the christians ; and when he was in the East, and was appealed to about the property of the episcopal house at Antioch, he condescended to hear the parties, and decided in favour of that person to whom a synod of the neighbouring bishops had assigned it. " Thus," says Eusebius, " was he affected towards us at that time. " Afterwards, at the instigation of others, he raised " a persecution against us, which excited much " alarm ; but he had no sooner prepared his edict " for that purpose, than he died by a conspiracy against him in the army‡." From this time to that of Dioclesian it does not appear that there was any considerable persecution of the christians. None  
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\* Sozomeni Hist. Lib. ii. Cap. 6. p. 52.

† Vopisci Aurel. Cap. 20. p. 852.

‡ Euseb Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 30, p. 364.

is mentioned by Eusebius, though, as the laws against them were not repealed, it is very probable that they might suffer in various places. There are, indeed, accounts of many martyrs, in the Martyrology, but the authority of this work is not very great.

### SECTION III.

*Of the Treatment of Penitents, and the Origin of the Novatians.*

ON the termination of the persecution by Decius, we see the progress that superstition had made in the minds of many christians. This persecution had been preceded by a long state of comparative rest, attended, as has always been the case, with a proportionable lukewarmness with respect to religion; so that when the christians were suddenly called upon to renounce their religion, or resign their possessions, their liberty or their lives, and generally to suffer torture also, great numbers were unable to stand the trial. Some complied without much hesitation with the

the demands of the governors to sacrifice to the heathen gods; but others thought to satisfy their consciences by eluding those demands; and this they did in various ways, but more especially by procuring, by interest or by money, certificates of their having sacrificed, though they had not done it.

Though these persons had not firmness enough to die for their religion, they did not therefore disbelieve it; and many of them, when they had recovered from their first consternation, and had felt the pangs of remorse, openly renounced their recantations, or gave up their certificates, and cheerfully suffered the extremity of the law. And the rest, when the danger was over, earnestly wished to be received into the bosom of the church by satisfying the demands of its regular officers, thinking that their eternal salvation depended upon it, and that without this no repentance, or contrition, would avail them in the sight of God.

According to the established forms of church discipline in those times, the *peace of the church*, as it was called, or a restoration to communion with it, could not be given to any person without the consent of the bishop, together with that of the other clergy and the people; though when the bishops were respected, their influence would naturally be very great, and almost decisive. Hence they

were incessantly teased by the lapsed, and recourse was had to every possible method of gaining their favour; but nothing was so effectual as the recommendation of a martyr or a confessor; any person being then considered as a *martyr* on whom sentence of death had been passed, especially if he had suffered torture or any other punishment; and he was a *confessor* who had acknowledged himself to be a christian before a heathen tribunal, though no punishment had actually followed.

The martyrs had, no doubt, great merit; but in this age something must be deducted from it on account of the superstitious respect that was paid to them. They were almost idolized by their fellow christians, both before and after their deaths; and when they survived torture, or the mines, &c. the homage that was paid to them could not fail to hurt their minds, though they had naturally been ever so good. Accordingly, many of them were intoxicated with the applause which they received, and often made an improper use of the influence which they acquired. But though, on this account, the temper of mind with which some endured martyrdom might be very unlike that with which Christ suffered, and therefore could not be said to be a proof of a truly christian character, it was a proof of their firm belief of the truth of christianity, and consequently affords to us the same evidence of it.



It having grown into an established custom, that the recommendation of a confessor, and especially that of a martyr, should entitle any person, without farther inquiry, to christian communion, the discipline of the church was greatly relaxed by the indiscreet ease with which they often granted these tickets of recommendation. They would not only give them to persons of whose repentance they were not well assured, but sometimes to a particular person and his friends, without distinguishing who they were. Some, before they died, would even leave it in charge to their friends, to grant the peace of the church in their names to all who should apply for it; so that it must have been thought that martyrdom operated to expiate the sins of others, as well as those of the martyr himself. Nay, it appears that these tickets were sometimes bought and sold, not perhaps in the first instance, but by those to whom they had been granted.

These abuses were sensibly and strenuously opposed by Cyprian, who, from the place of his concealment in the former persecution, wrote the most earnest letters to the martyrs and confessors, to his own clergy and the people, and also to the church of Rome, on the subject. For the idea of the necessity of an uniform discipline in all the great sees, which was productive of much evil afterwards, was by this time firmly established; so that a simple

ple notification of communion with any one church was a sufficient recommendation to any other ; and for the same reason excommunication from any church was an excommunication from them all ; distant churches seldom thinking it necessary to examine into the grounds of proceeding in other churches, as we have seen in the case of Origen.

To oppose this baneful influence of the martyrs and confessors, Cyprian urged that the care of the church was committed by Christ to the apostles, and by them to the ordinary bishops and clergy, who were responsible for their conduct in it ; and he resolutely refused to receive any certificates without restriction and examination. It was admitted, however, by him, as well as by others, that in the article of death, the badge of communion should not be withheld from any who had professed repentance, as it was necessary to their dying in peace.

These laudable efforts of Cyprian were aided, and rendered effectual, by letters from the clergy, and even the confessors, at Rome, addressed to the church of Carthage, and to Cyprian himself ; so that we hear no more of this gross abuse in any subsequent persecution, and probably it was nowhere very great except in Africa only.

It is no uncommon thing for one extreme to produce another. At the same time that there were so many just complaints of the relaxation of discipline

discipline, in consequence of the improper interference of the confessors, others, at the head of whom was Novatus, a presbyter at Rome, and a learned and respectable man, maintained that they who had apostatized ought not on any terms, and whatever professions they might make of repentance, to be restored to the peace of the church; \* and on this principle he made himself the head of a new sect called *Cathari*, on account of their professing greater purity than others. This Novatus had first separated from the church of Rome, and had procured himself, as it is said, to be elected bishop, in opposition to Cornelius, whose election he had opposed, and which he pretended was invalid. However, he was joined by several bishops in Italy, and by some confessors, which in that age was deemed a great acquisition; but his friends were most numerous in Africa, though he did not succeed in his attempts to get the concurrence of Cyprian.

In this he failed, in part perhaps, on account of his being joined by another Novatus, a presbyter of the church of Carthage, who had had some difference with Cyprian, and who, in opposition to him, had ordained Felicissimus a deacon; in a separate congregation in which he presided. For this, and other crimes which were laid to his charge, but of which no proof appears,

Cyprian

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 43. p. 510.

Cyprian proposed to have him excommunicated ; but the breaking out of the persecution put a stop to the proceedings.

In the absence of Cyprian, Novatus and Felicissimus strengthened their party against him, and though at his return he procured the expulsion of Felicissimus and his friends ; they, despising the sentence, formed a new church in Carthage, and chose for the bishop one Fortunatus, a presbyter who had been included in the sentence of excommunication\*. We do not, however, hear any thing more of this schism, and probably those of whom it consisted joined the party of the Roman Novatus, whose disciples soon formed separate churches in all parts of the christian world.

To decide concerning him and his principles, a synod was called at Rome, consisting of sixty bishops, and a much greater number of the inferior clergy ; and in this Novatus and his party were excommunicated, and his opinion condemned. A synod was also held at Carthage on the same subject, in which Cyprian presided ; and in this the sentence of the synod at Rome was confirmed, and particular rules were agreed upon relating to the admission

\* These particulars of the proceedings in Africa, I take from Mosheim (*De Rebus Christianorum Ante Constantinum*, p. 497, &c.) who collected them from the letters of Cyprian, and who does not altogether approve the conduct of the bishop in the business.

admission of penitents, according to the nature and degree of their guilt ; and among these it was determined, that the clergy who had apostatized in the time of persecution, should only be restored to communion as laymen.

Eusebius gives us, on this occasion, a letter from Cæcilius to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, in which he draws a most frightful picture of Novatus, and of his conduct, in procuring himself to be elected bishop, and the method he took to keep his friends attached to him ; but it has too much the appearance of invective and calumny. As the Novatians boasted that the founder of their sect was a martyr, it is probable that he was one, and that he suffered in the reign of Valerian, as Cæcilius his opponent, did in the time of Gallus\*.

By this letter it appears that there were in the church of Rome at this time forty-four presbyters, seven deacons, as many subdeacons, and fifty-two officers of inferior kinds, more than one hundred and fifty widows, sick persons, or poor, who were maintained out of the funds of the church ; and the common people are said to be innumerable†.

There is also in Eusebius an excellent letter of Dionysius bishop of Alexandria to Novatus, reproving him for making a schism in the church, and

\* Cypriani Ep. p. 181. Socratis Hist. Lib. iv. Cap. 38. p. 250.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 43. p. 310.

and exhorting him to restore its union\*. In another letter he condemns the harshness of Novatus and his friends, especially with respect to their treatment of penitents; and their rebaptizing those who quitted the communion of the catholic church to join them, as if their former baptism had been of no effect†.

It must be observed, however, that the Novatians did not maintain that all those who had once apostatized would be excluded from heaven. On the contrary, they encouraged their repentance, but left them to the judgement of God, keeping their own church pure from so great a stain as they considered apostacy, and probably other great offences, to be. They also thought that no other church could be deemed pure, or its ordinances valid, which admitted such improper members. It is very possible, therefore, that many persons of the most exemplary piety and virtue might chuse to join a church which professed such great strictness.

The sect of Novatians continued till after the middle of the fifth century, and their maxim of rebaptizing those who joined them from other churches, was adopted by the Donatists. Cyprian and the bishops of Africa had no reason to complain of the Novatians for rebaptizing those who joined

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 45, p. 318.

† Ibid. Lib. vii, Cap. 8, p. 328;

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joined them from other churches : since they had given it as their solemn opinion that all heretics should be rebaptized ; and since the Novatians were considered as heretics by the catholics, they would, no doubt, consider *them* in the same light.

The question about rebaptizing heretics was at this very time agitated with great earnestness in Africa ; and a council on the subject was held at Carthage, A. D. 255. In this Cyprian presided, and it was unanimously determined that the baptism of heretics should be considered as invalid, and in this he had the concurrence of Firmilian, and probably that of the eastern churches in general ; who, in a council held at Iconium in Phrygia, consisting of the bishops of Galatia, Cilicia, and the neighbouring provinces, agreed that heretics should not be received into the church without being rebaptized. This we learn from the epistle of Firmilian in the works of Cyprian\*. To shew that baptism in all the usual forms could not always be considered as valid, or have the effects of a real baptism, he mentions a case of its being administered by a woman out of her senses, or, as he thought, actuated by a dæmon, probably one of the Montanists, who were often considered in that light. " Could the remission of sins and regeneration," he says, " be given by such a baptism."

VOL. I.

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\* Epist. p. 221.

In this we see the superstition of this good man, and of the times.

In this epistle Firmilian answers what had been alleged by Stephen bishop of Rome, who not only opposed the rebaptizing of heretics, but had excommunicated the African churches for doing it,\* and he alleges among other things that the church of Rome had not in all things kept to the antient and apostolical practices, as with respect to the celebration of Easter and other things.

Afterwards it came to be a received maxim, and was confirmed by the council of Nice, that if the heretics had used the proper form of baptism, that is, if they had baptized *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, it should be deemed valid, and therefore should not be repeated: it being thought impious to treat a real sacrament as if it had no virtue in it, such was the superstition with which this rite was then considered.

This opinion, however, was not always able to give satisfaction to persons of a timorous disposition; who were afraid that they had not received the true baptism. Dionysius of Alexandria describes a case of this kind, with respect to which he appears not to have known how to act, in a letter to Xistus bishop of Rome. A person who had been baptized by some heretics (of what denomination is not

\* *Rumpens adversus vos pacem, Cypriani Opera, p. 280.*



not mentioned) applied to him to be rebaptized, using the most earnest entreaties for that purpose, and though he told him that he could not regularly do it, and that in his opinion the communion of the Lord's supper, to which he would be admitted, might satisfy him, he still had the greatest dread of communicating in those circumstances, as one of the *unworthy persons* mentioned by Paul, who *eat and drink damnation to themselves*. It was even with great difficulty that this person could be prevailed upon to attend the prayers which accompanied the celebration of the eucharist. Dionysius writes to the bishop of Rome to know what he should do in such a case as this.\* What answer Xistus returned, does not appear. Indeed, I do not see how they could satisfy the scruples of this man, in whose mind the opinions of divines, and even of councils, seem to have had but little weight.

There were two cases respecting the baptism of heretics, one that of those who had always been such, and the other that of those who had left the catholic church to join any heretical society; and to the former more favour was shewn than to the latter. But Dionysius says he had learned of his predecessor Heraclas, to receive both without rebaptizing; because they had received the Holy Spirit,† as if that was the necessary consequence of

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii. Cap. 9. p. 329.

† Some MSS. have not the word *spirit*; and accor-

of baptism in the proper form. At the same time this excellent man represents the decision of the African churches as no new thing, but as the same with that of the churches of Asia at Iconium and Synnada long before; and seems to intimate that what had once been settled on a subject of this nature, in any place, should not be altered, quoting the law of Moses, *Thou shalt not remove the land mark*; at least that they should not be disturbed by other churches on that account.\* This was acting with the moderation of a christian, and a lover of peace. Jerom represents him as agreeing in opinion with Cyprian and the African churches.

All the ecclesiastical historians make great lamentations on account of the schism that was made in the christian church by the Novatians, whose difference from the Catholics respected matters of discipline only. On the contrary, I cannot help thinking that this breach in the unity of the christian church in that age, and other similar breaches at other times, have had a very happy effect upon the whole.

Besides promoting free inquiry and discussion, without which no subject can be well understood, and which is necessary to give a general confidence in what shall be afterwards acquiesced in, sects

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 ding to them, Dionysius only said, that they had already received a *holy*, or true *baptism*.

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi, Cap. 8, p. 327.

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were the means of preventing that overbearing authority which the whole christian church united could not have failed to have, and which, if there had been no place of retreat from its power, would have been insupportable. What would have been the terror of an excommunication from such a church, and how would it have been possible to correct any abuse in such circumstances?

That families and friends should have been divided, and that those divisions should have been the cause of so much animosity as often took place on these occasions, is, no doubt, to be lamented. But this was an evil that did not necessarily arise from sects in religion, but only from that unreasonable spirit of bigotry in men, which could not bear with patience that others should think or act differently from them; that very bigotry, which a number of sects, and their necessary consequences, can alone cure. Private animosity was an evil inseparable from the promulgation of christianity itself, and was distinctly foretold by our Saviour.

The excellent character of many of the Novatian bishops, we shall find to have been of great use in exciting the emulation of the catholic bishops, and in checking that abuse of power, and other irregularities, which would have disgraced christianity infinitely more than these divisions which are so much complained of. The schism made by Luther, so much opposed and lamented at the time, has

has been a means of reforming the church of Rome itself; and the benefit which the established church of England derives from the Dissenters is too apparent to be denied by any man of cool observation. It has been acknowledged by the English clergy themselves. But ecclesiastical historians have been struck with the immediate and temporary evils arising from the division of the christian church by numerous sects and parties, and have not sufficiently reflected on the more remote, but necessary, and highly beneficial, uses of them.

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#### S E C T I O N IV.

##### *Of the Origin of the Monks.*

THE persecution of Decius, which fell particularly heavy on Egypt, gave occasion to the rise of another species of superstition, which from small beginnings extended itself over the whole christian world, and which, with some good, was productive of much evil, so as to make a very important

portant period in the history of the christian church.

I mean that species of superstition, under the influence of which persons have thought there was a real merit in bodily austerity, and in excluding themselves from the common comforts and enjoyments of life, especially in leading single lives, and being in all respects as far removed as possible from all commerce with the world.

It is evident that nothing of this kind was prescribed by Christ, or the apostles. Every person is by them supposed to live in society, and is exhorted to do the duties of it, and to be useful in it. Celibacy is, indeed, recommended by the apostle Paul, but only for prudential reasons, as subjecting men to less inconvenience in time of difficulty and persecution ; and the state of marriage is always spoken of as honourable. Nor does it appear that, even in this age, any christian adopted this new mode of life on the principles on which it was recommended afterwards. The first hermits were men who had been driven by persecution to a distance from cities ; and being obliged to conceal themselves in desert places, far from human society, but being able to subsist (either from the natural fruits of the ground, their own labour, or the charity of others) they by degrees acquired a fondness for it ; and their satisfaction in it would, no doubt, be increased by the respect that was paid them, on account of their great sanctity, as men  
who

who had abandoned the world, and all the enjoyments of it, for the sake of religion ; so that they were considered in the same light as martyrs and confessors ; and such some of them were. The same idea of sanctity was by degrees transferred to those who chose the society of the original hermits, who relieved their wants in their rigid mode of life, and were induced to adopt the same themselves. At first also they did not make any vows, by which they bound themselves either to live single lives, or to renounce the world in any respect ; but they mixed with it, whenever they thought they could do it with safety to themselves, or advantage to others.

Besides the habit of living in solitude, to which the christians were driven by persecution, some maxims which had their origin in heathenism, greatly contributed to recommend this austere mode of life. The doctrine of a *soul*, as an immaterial substance distinct from the body, and capable of subsisting in a state of much greater perfection and happiness without it, which was first adopted by the heathen philosophers, was by this time almost universally received among christians ; and from this fruitful principle, among other consequences highly unfavourable to genuine christianity, there soon arose the idea of endeavouring to detach the soul from the body as much as possible, even during their connexion, which was always thought

thought to be unfavourable to the spiritual part of man, and necessarily to contaminate it. Every thing, therefore, which tended to reconcile the soul to its fleshy tabernacle, such as sensual indulgences of all kinds, even those which had always been deemed innocent, was to be carefully avoided. Whatever tended to mortify the body was conceived to be for the advantage of the soul; and the state the nearest to this ideal perfection was thought to be that in which life could be supported with the fewest enjoyments, or corporeal gratifications possible. Even those of the eye and the ear, which were always deemed to be the most refined of corporeal pleasures were reprobated.

At the same time that the antient heathen religions allowed, upon some occasions, the grossest sensual indulgences, in other cases they imposed acts of the greatest rigour, and required the most costly sacrifices; some of their gods being of such a disposition, that it was thought nothing else would conciliate them. Hence many of the heathen priests who devoted themselves to the peculiar service of these gods, submitted to great mortifications, as fasting &c. and performed upon themselves the most painful operations, such as cutting their flesh, &c. to say nothing of their human sacrifices, and the most shocking cruelties committed upon others. Some of the male priests castrated themselves, and the women devoted themselves to a state of virgin-

ity. All these things had been deemed acts of heroism, and without the least regard to moral virtue, had been thought to recommend men to the favour of the gods.

In these things, unfortunately, the christians vied with the heathens, being ashamed not to be able to make as great sacrifices to true religion, as any persons had ever done to false ones. Hence some christian hermits seem to have emulated the severities of the Indian Faquirs, making a merit of the mere enduring of pain, and the renunciation of all the comforts and enjoyments of life.

Lastly, the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophers, whose writings the learned christians chiefly studied, thought that, by the force of contemplation, they could, in a great measure, detach the soul from the body, and thus re-ascend to that state of *union with God*, which all souls were supposed to have had before they were separated from that one great source of intelligence, and in which they expected to be absorbed, after undergoing a state of discipline in this lower world; and the reveries they naturally fell into in a state of long silence and solitude, to which, for this purpose, they sometimes gave themselves up (a state in which they were hardly sensible of the presence of any material objects) they imagined to be this detached and exalted condition of the soul, such as it would attain to in an unembodied state.

Christians



Christians deeply tainted with these notions, thought that *prayer* would greatly assist in this grand operation, and do more for them than mere *meditation* could for the heathen philosophers. Hence, to the most mortified state that the body could bear, they added the mental exercises of incessant meditation and prayer; and this indolent contemplative mode of life they imagined to be the most perfect that human nature was capable of in this world.

But as it was necessary for the preservation of mankind, that some persons should marry, and do the common offices of human life, and therefore these things could not be absolutely said to be sinful, christians followed the heathen philosophers in adopting the idea of *two classes of men*, the *operative* and the *contemplative*, and of the greatest inferiority of the former to the latter. Those persons, who performed these common offices of life, and partook of the common enjoyments of it, feeling a natural reluctance to the idea of abandoning them, were easily led to form the idea of the superior *excellence*, as well as of the greater *difficulty*, of a state of mortification, and were glad to minister to all the wants of the contemplative order of christians, from the benefit they hoped to derive from their prayers, which they conceived to be far more meritorious and effectual than their own.

Thus did heathen maxims, in the most specious

ous and least suspected manner, introduce themselves into christianity, and debase the genuine spirit of it; and by this means were men gradually led to place the greatest merit in things that had no relation to moral virtue. And what was of still worse consequence, mankind having, as they thought, this sure way of making themselves acceptable to God, were too apt to neglect any other, and even thought to make atonement for their vices by those austerities, or those donations which were thought to be equivalent to them. For it has been universally observed, that the prevalence of superstition has always been attended with a proportional disregard of moral virtue.

The duties of superstition have this to recommend them, that it is easily known when they are discharged; whereas the moral improvement of the temper and disposition of mind is a less definite, and more uncertain thing, so as to be less easily estimated. And when a man is persuaded that he can secure his future salvation by fasting, by penance, or by money, he will generally acquiesce in it, rather than have recourse to that constant attention to his heart and life, which true christianity requires.

Notwithstanding this injury done to christianity by the maxims of heathenism, there was something in it, and inseparable from it, which preserved it from that deplorably wretched and contemptible

ble state in which mere heathenism left men. Moral precepts, especially those of humility, meekness, benevolence, and heavenly mindedness, are so frequently inculcated in the gospel, that they could not be wholly overlooked. Consequently, almost all the orders of monks, notwithstanding the time they gave to meditation and prayer, and the severities they exercised upon themselves, practised some acts of beneficence, and studied to be useful to the world ; not to observe that their reading of the scriptures, and prayers, together with their habitual endeavours to raise their minds above this world, and to prepare themselves, in their way, for another (about which the heathens knew nothing at all) would render them, personally considered, superior characters to any that mere heathenism could produce. And, indeed, it is evident that, in the early ages (in the middle ages too, and I believe at the present time also) the generality of monks, notwithstanding the factious disposition of some, and the hypocrisy and secret sensuality of others, have lived very innocent lives, and many of them highly useful ones, especially by their application to literature.

For it must not be forgotten, that it is to the monks that we are indebted for a great part of what now remains of the learning of the antients. The northern nations, which first overwhelmed the Roman empire, had been previously converted to christianity ;

tianity; and the respect which they had for monks and monasteries, made those places a valuable and happy asylum for letters. It was also happy that, in a time of such general confusion as that in which all the states in Europe were for several centuries involved, there was any place of safe retreat for those who were disgusted with the world, and wished to retire from it, whether they were driven thither by remorse for their own crimes, or by the violence of others.

The first hermits that we read of were some who took refuge in Upper Egypt, or Thebais, during the persecution of Decius, remote from Alexandria and the sea coast; and one Paul is mentioned, as a person who distinguished himself the most by his solitary life in that country. It is said by Jerom, who writes his life, that being heir to a great patrimony, his sister's husband, in order to get possession of it, informed against him; and that upon this he fled to the mountainous parts of Thebais, where he was safe from his pursuers. This place, however, he quitted several times; but at length, finding a convenient cavern in a rock, he lived there ninety years, dying at the age of one hundred and thirteen. We shall have occasion enough to speak of the followers of this Paul in the succeeding periods of this history.

S E C T I O N V.

*Of Unitarianism in this Period.*

WE have seen that unitarianism was the belief of all the christian world during the age of the apostles, and till the time of Justin Martyr, when he, and some other Platonic philosophers, being converted to christianity, mixed their peculiar notions with it. In this they acted with perfect integrity, though they were, no doubt, biaſſed more than they themselves were aware of, by the flattering idea of representing their religion to themselves, and others, in a more respectable light than that of the doctrine of a man who had been crucified. They therefore held that Christ was not a mere man, but that the *logos*, the power and wisdom of the one supreme God, had been, in some ineffable manner, emitted from him, so as to become a distinct person; and that this *logos* was so united to Jesus, that by virtue of it he was intitled to the appellation of *God*.

Still, however, not to alarm the common people, who justly dreaded the doctrine of a *second God*, they always spoke of Christ, though a God,

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as greatly inferior to the Father, as having derived every thing from him, who was alone [*απαρχῆς*] *without origin*, and intirely subservient to his will. They were also far from molesting the common people, who retained the plain doctrine of one God, and who considered Christ as a man inspired by God. Thinking themselves much superior to them in knowledge, they rather despised them for their weakness, and their incapacity to comprehend this sublime doctrine which they had imbibed.

In this light Origen always exhibits his own opinion and theirs. "There are," says he,\* "who partake of the *logos* which was from the beginning, the *logos* that was with God, and the *logos* that was God—but there are others who know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, the *logos* that was made flesh, thinking they have every thing of the *logos* when they acknowledge Christ according to the flesh. Such is the multitude of those who are called christians." Again, he says,† "the 'multitudes,' that is the great mass or body, "of the believers are instructed in the shadow of the *logos*, and not in the true *logos* of God." That Tertullian considered the greater part of christians as dreading the doctrine of the trinity in his time, and as adhering strictly to that of the sole monarchy of God the Father,

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\* Comment. in Johan. Vol. ii, p. 49.

† Ibid, vol. ii, p. 52.

we have seen already. Unfortunately, the writings of all the ancient unitarians are lost. But still there is evidence sufficient of there having been writers who maintained their opinion against the learned Platonists. Beryllus is said to have been an elegant writer. Artemon and Theodotus, in the preceding period, were also writers, and they had many admirers.

In the period of which I am now treating, the platonizing bishops were unquestionably more numerous than any other; and to this the school of Alexandria, and the reputation of Origen, had probably contributed; the most eminent of the bishops having been the disciples of Origen, such as Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory of Neocæsarea, and Firmilian of Cappadocia. It is probable, however, that these men, especially the two last, retained the moderation, as well as the doctrine, of Origen on this subject. For they were far from proceeding with the decision and violence of the Catholics of a later period, when the unitarian doctrine came before them.

Those who incurred censure for holding the unitarian doctrine in this period were Noetus of Smyrna or Ephesus, Sabellius in Africa, and Paulus Samosatensis bishop of Antioch. Noetus is not mentioned by Eusebius; but Epiphanius and others speak of him as the head of a sect, who were called Noetians after him. He probably flourish-

ed not long after, A. D. 280, and what he wrote on the subject was replied to by Hippolytus. But neither the works of Noetus, nor that of his answerer, are now extant. At least the genuineness of the tract which goes under the name of Hippolytus is questioned. Noetus, persisting in his opinions was expelled from the church of which he was a member, together with those who were of the same opinion with him; and Predestinatus says that he was also condemned by Tranquillus bishop of Chalcedon in Syria.\*

There are, however, so many improbable circumstances in Epiphanius's account of Noetus, and also of his brother (such as his pretending that he was Moses, and his brother Aaron, and that when they died the orthodox refused to bury them†) that there is but little to be depended upon in what he says concerning him and his followers, except that they were unitarians. Theodoret says that Noetus was the disciple of Epigonus, and that he was followed by Cleomenes.‡

Eusebius says but little of Sabellius, who is supposed to have published those writings which gave offence to the orthodox, as they called themselves about A. D. 255, or 256, and which were answered by Dionysius of Alexandria in 257, or 258. So many bishops of Africa were then unitarians, that

\* Lardner's Works, Vol. iii, p. 12.

† Hær. 57. Opera, Vol. 1, p. 480.

‡ Hær. Fab. Lib. iii, Cap. 3, Opera, Vol. iv, p. 227



that Athanasius says, "the Son of God," meaning his divinity, "was scarcely any longer preached "in the churches;" and Sabellius was so distinguished a person, that the unitarians went by his name even in the time of Austin, though in general it had given place to that of Photinians, from Photinus bishop of Sirmium, and a much more eminent writer. So popular was unitarianism in this age, that, according to Epiphanius when the unitarians met with any of the plainer christians, they would say, "Well friend, what doctrine shall we hold, shall we acknowledge one God or three." By this short and plain argument he acknowledged that they gained the pious and plain people to join them.\*

Noetus, if Epiphanius may be credited, was excommunicated from his own church, of which, as he was a writer, it is probable that he might be a presbyter; but it is remarkable that, though Sabellius was much more known, and his opinions generally prevailed, at least in Africa, there was no council called on his account, no examination of his opinions, nor any public censure of them; when a preceding bishop of Alexandria had called a council for the purpose of condemning Origen. It does not appear that any application was ever made to Sabellius himself by any christian bishop or writer. All that we hear of, as written against his

\* Hær. 62. Opera, Vol. i, p. 514.

his opinion,, is a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria, addressed to Xistus bishop of Rome, Ammon bishop of Berenice, and four books addressed to Dionysius another bishop of Rome.\*

It is perhaps no less remarkable that, notwithstanding the blasphemous opinions, as they are commonly called, of which the Trinitarians accused Sabellius, no immorality appears to have been laid to his charge. It may therefore be safely inferred that his moral character and conduct were unexceptionable. And since no public censure was passed upon him, it may also be inferred, either that his opinions were not considered as very obnoxious, or that his friends were so many, that his enemies had no prospect of success in any measures that they might take against him.

Paul, a native of Samosata, was bishop of Antioch, twelve or thirteen years, in the time of the celebrated Zenobia, with whom he was a great favourite. Making allowance for prejudice and exaggeration, Dr. Lardner thinks that, from what Eusebius and others have said of him†, we may draw the following character. "He had a great mind, "with a mixture of haughtiness, and too much "affection for human applause. He was generally well respected in his diocese, and by the "neighbouring bishops; in esteem with the great, "and

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 26, p. 356.

† Ibid, Lib. vii, Cap. 27, p. 257, &c.

"and beloved by the common people. He preached frequently, and was a good speaker; and from what is said by the Fathers of the council of his rejecting and laying aside some hymns as modern, and composed by moderns, it may be argued that he was a critic\*.

It appears that Paul had a difference with his presbyter Malchion, who procured a council to be summoned, which, according to Athanasius, was attended by one hundred and seventy, or one hundred and eighty bishops, but according to Eusebius about six hundred, A. D. 264. At this synod Firmilian was present, but Dionysius of Alexandria, not being able to attend, sent a letter. In this synod Paul was only admonished, and not condemned. But in another synod, or council, at which Eusebius says†, innumerable bishops were present, but not Firmilian, or Gregory of Neocæsarea, he was excommunicated, and deposed. The dispute between Paul and Malchion, who had presided in a school of rhetoric at Antioch, was made public. Malchion also drew up the synodical letter in the name of the Fathers of this council, which is preserved in Eusebius.‡ It is evidently dictated by the strongest prejudice and malice. Had half the villanies and immoralities that Paul is there charged

\* Works, Vol. iii. p. 94,

† Hist. Lib. vii. Cap. 28. p. 358.

‡ Ibid. Lib. vii. Cap. 30. p. 359.

charged with been true, it cannot be supposed that such men as Firmilian, Gregory, and those who attended at the first council, would have hesitated to depose him.

Notwithstanding this deposition by a council of bishops, Paul could not be removed from the episcopal house (which, however, it is evident he could not have occupied without the good will of the people, who, it must be observed had alone a proper right to depose him) till the authority of the emperor Aurelian, who was the enemy of Zenoëbia, was called in. What became of Paul afterwards is not said ; but from him the unitarians were generally called *Paulians* till the council of Nice.

Paul was a writer, but we have no particular account of his works ; and he not only held the doctrine of the humanity of Christ, but probably denied the miraculous conception ; as he said that “ he acknowledged in Christ, the powerful “ word from heaven, by predetermination before “ all ages, but that it was manifested at Nazareth,” which he probably considered as the place of his birth\*. It is also probable that the followers of Paul did not baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, because it was decreed by the council of Nice, that if any of them joined the catholic

\* Athanasius De Adventu Jesu Christi, Opera, Vol. i, p. 635 637.

catholic church, they should be rebaptized ; which the orthodox of that age never did, if the baptism had been in that form, by whomsoever it had been administered.

It is acknowledged that the Fathers who condemned the errors of Paul maintained that the son was not *consubstantial* (*ὁμοουσιος*) or of the same nature with the Father, which is the very reverse of what was defined to be orthodoxy at the council of Nice. But it may be accounted for in the following manner. The more philosophical unitarians said that the divinity which was in Christ was that of the Father, and therefore of the same substance with him. But it had been the custom, as we have seen, with the first Trinitarians, to speak of Christ (though they gave him the appellation of *God*) as greatly inferior to the Father ; and in expressing this they had not scrupled to say that he was of a different nature (*ουσια*) from the Father. This they did the more effectually to distinguish between the persons of the Father and Son, which they commonly charged the Sabellians with confounding. But afterwards, when the Arians arose, and maintained that Christ was not only inferior to the Father, but a *creature*, made out of nothing, they who had held that the divine principle in Christ was the *logos*, or wisdom of the Father, personified, changed their language, and adopted another, more agreeable to their principles ; saying that  
Christ

Christ was not of a *different* nature from the Father, but of the *very same substance*, or *consubstantial* with him; as indeed he necessarily must have been, if his divinity had ever been a proper attribute of the Father.

Though Paul was deposed, partly for his opinions, and partly for his pride, and the other vices which were laid to his charge (but which do not appear to have been proved) none of his clergy, or of the laity, are said to have been excommunicated along with him; and yet as he is allowed to have been very popular in his see, many of them must, no doubt, have thought as he did, as also must the bishops and presbyters of other churches who were his admirers. It is thought by some that Lucian of Antioch put himself at the head of Paul's followers, who of their own accord formed a separate society; though some considered him as having entertained opinions much the same as those of Arius.

SECTION VI.

*Of the Controversy concerning the Reign of Christ upon Earth.*

**D**IONYSIUS of Alexandria, who distinguished himself in every thing in which christianity was concerned, held a public disputation within this period with some who maintained that the reign of Christ would be upon earth, and who were likewise charged with saying that under him christians would enjoy carnal delights. Nepos, a bishop in Egypt, had written a book in defence of this opinion, and it was answered by Dionysius, who, with a candour that does him the greatest honour, speaks in the highest terms of the genius and piety of Nepos, who was then dead, especially on account of the many hymns which he had composed, and which were very much valued by christians. Many whole churches of Egypt adopted the opinion of Nepos, and with them it was that Dionysius held this public disputation, or rather friendly conference, which continued three whole

days from morning till evening. Dionysius, in his account of this conference, greatly praises the candour of these *Millenarians*, as they were usually called, and says that at the opening of the conference both he and they expressed the greatest readiness to relinquish their opinions, if after the discussion of them they should appear not to be well founded. The issue was that Coracio, who was then at the head of these people, professed himself convinced of his error, and openly declared that he would teach it no more ; so that this conference ended, as very few have done, to the satisfaction of both parties.\*

That the reign of Christ, whatever be its nature, will be on this earth, seems to be evident, from what was said by the angels at the time of his ascension, viz. that he would return from heaven in the same manner as they then saw him go up thither. And as we are not informed that any change will be made in our future bodies besides what relates to the difference of sex, it does not appear but that they are to be supported by food. Our Saviour himself seems to have thought so, when, in taking leave of his disciples, he told them that he should no more taste the fruit of the vine, till he should drink it new with them in the kingdom of heaven. The opinion of Nepos is well known to have

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 24, p. 349.



have been held by Papias, and he always maintained that he had it from the apostles.

As to the sensual delights which it is said these Millenarians contended for, the charge was probably a calumny. Neither Papias, nor this Nepos, were persons who are said to have been at all addicted to them ; being men of great purity of manners, as well as piety. And it may easily be supposed that the idea which took place very early, and extended itself very fast, of the natural impurity of every thing *corporeal*, led the generality of christians to put a spiritual sense upon every expression by which the happiness of a future state is denoted. According to some, our pleasures are to be so much of an intellectual nature, that it cannot be conceived how our corporeal senses, even those of seeing and hearing, should be of any use to us.

SECTION VII.

*Of the Writers within this Period.*

THE writers within this period, considering the length of it, and the proportion of peace that was in it, are not many, and of their works several were suggested by the persecution, and the consequences of it. Several of them were of the Alexandrian school, from which the literature and the platonizing theology of christians was for several ages derived.

The principal of them is Cyprian, of whose conduct and martyrdom an account has already been given. He wrote many *letters* relating to the occurrences of his times, especially on the subject of martyrdom, the baptism of heretics, the reception of the lapsed, &c. and some short treatises, viz. on the vanity of idols ; against the heathen religion ; *Testimonies*, consisting of a collection of texts of scripture on different subjects, chiefly from the Old Testament ; on discipline ; on the conduct and apparel of virgins ; on mercy and alms giving ; on patience ; on envy ; concerning those who had apostatized ;

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postatized; and of the unity of the church, written on occasion of the schism of Novatus, and the faction of Felicissimus; who granted the peace of the church too readily to those who had fallen. Lastly, his treatise addressed to Demetrianus is an answer to those who accused the christians of being the cause of all the calamities of the state. Cyprian had been a teacher of rhetoric before he was a christian; and it is observed that he is one of the first of the christian writers who have been admired for their eloquence.

Pontius, a deacon of Cyprian's wrote an account of his life and death\*.

Cotemporary with Cyprian, was Commodianus, another Latin author, of whom an account is given by Gennadius, who wrote near the end of the fifth century. His treatise *against the Pagans*, or more properly *instructions* to persons of every description in a loose kind of verse is still extant.

Novatus, the author of the schism that has been mentioned, composed the first treatise that was expressly written on the subject of the trinity, in which he explains with great clearness the generally received doctrine concerning the person of Christ before the council of Nice; maintaining that he was the *logos*, or reason of the Father, but nevertheless greatly inferior to him. He is also supposed

\* Jerom, Cap. 79.

supposed to be the author of a treatise on Jewish meats, of another on Easter, and of circumcision, as well as of some letters, especially one from the clergy of Rome to Cyprian. Both Novatus and Cyprian wrote in Latin.

Cornelius bishop of Rome, wrote several epistles, chiefly on the subject of his difference with Novatus, but none of them are now extant\*.

Gregory, bishop of Neocæsarea, the disciple of Origen, composed a discourse in his praise, a paraphrase on Ecclesiastes, and a canonical epistle, directed to a bishop, about the penance to be exacted of those who returned to the church, after having been guilty of various crimes, during the incursion of the barbarians into Asia, in the reign of Gallienus. There are other works falsely attributed to him.

Dionysius of Alexandria was the most distinguished writer, as well as actor, of the age in which he lived. He also had been the disciple of Origen. Some of his works have been mentioned in the course of this history; but nothing of his is now extant, except some fragments preserved in Eusebius. He wrote what were called *paschal letters*, relating to the time of celebrating Easter, shewing that it ought to be before the vernal equinox; and he published a canon, or cycle, of eight years, for the direction of christians with respect to

\* Jerom, Cap. 77.

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to it\*. Eusebius also quotes a second book of his concerning promises, meaning probably the rewards of virtue in a future state against the Millenarians†.

Dionysius speaks of his having had two revelations, one directing him to withdraw from the persecution in the time of Decius‡, and the other to encourage him to read the works of heretics, by which he evidently meant those of the Gnostics, as he speaks of their traditions (παράδοσεις) and of defiling his mind with their execrable opinions (παμμιχρῆς αὐτῶν ἐνθυμήσεσιν§). But as he mentions no circumstances of those revelations, the latter of which he calls a vision, it is impossible for us to determine whether they were real or not. With respect to the former, he solemnly declares that he told no untruth, and therefore there can be no doubt but that, if this excellent man was imposed upon by his own imagination, he was far from intending to impose upon others. As God has vouchsafed revelations of a similar nature to other persons, he, no doubt, *may* have done it in his case; but the facts are destitute of sufficient evidence.

In

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 20, p. 314.

† Ibid. Lib. iii. Cap. 28, p. 122.

‡ Ibid. Lib. vi, Cap. 40, p. 302.

§ Ibid, Lib. vii. Cap. 7. p. 326.

In this period Anatolius of Alexandria, but bishop of Laodicea, distinguished himself by his genius and his writings, excelling in his knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, logic, philosophy, and rhetoric. He wrote a treatise concerning Easter, a part of which is extant in Latin, Eusebius gives a large account of this Anatolius, of the great esteem in which he was held at Alexandria, and especially of his services at the time of a siege\*.

Theognostus of Alexandria, quoted by Athanasius and others, but not mentioned by Eusebius appears to have been a considerable writer, and author of a treatise, entitled, *Institutions*, which was not altogether approved by those who claimed the title of orthodox in a later period, as he called the Son *a creature*.

Pierius, a presbyter of Alexandria, wrote with so much elegance, that Jerom says he was called the *younger Origen*. He wrote a commentary on Hosea, and a treatise on Easter, neither of them now extant. Eusebius speaks highly of him, as eminent for sublime philosophy†.

This period produced two works which deserve to be mentioned for their singularity, and the relation they bear to christianity. The Heathen philosophers were, no doubt, much offended at the

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 32. p. 366.

† Hist. Lib, vii, Cap. 32, p. 373.

the progress of the new religion ; and this progress was evidently owing to the belief of the *miracles* of Christ and the apostles, recorded in the Evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles. To counteract the effect of these writings, it is highly probable that we now find the life of Pythagoras written by Porphyry, and more largely by Jamblichus, and also that of Apollonius Tyanæus by Philostratus; and as they abound with the accounts of *miracles*, it may be worth while to mention some of them, that the judicious reader may compare them with those which they seem to have been intended to rival, and discredit.

Pythagoras had been dead almost eight hundred years before these lives of him were written ; and very little indeed had been recorded of him by any credible historian. In these circumstances these writers might collect vague traditions, or invent anecdotes, without fear of being contradicted by any positive evidence ; but being, on the same account, necessarily destitute of proper vouchers themselves, they could not be intitled to any credit. And, indeed, the stories are such as abundantly confute themselves, being extremely silly, not brought as any proof of a divine mission, and having no rational object whatever.

If any credit, say both Porphyry and Jamblichus (the latter of whom seems to have copied the former) may be given to many ancient and excel-

lent men, who have written concerning Pythagoras, his philosophy had in it something from which even brute animals might receive instruction. He so tamed a wild bear of Daunia, which had committed great ravages in the country, that he bound it by an oath never to meddle with any living creature for the future ; so that ever afterwards it confined itself to the woods, and never injured any animal, tame or wild. Seeing an ox at Tarentum eating green beans, he whispered something in his ear, and from that time he never tasted beans any more ; and living long after this near the Temple of Juno, he was called the ox of Pythagoras. Explaining to his disciples at Olympia that birds were messengers from God to pious men, he brought down an eagle which was then flying over their heads, and after he had caressed him for some time, dismissed him again ; by which, say these writers, he shewed that, like Orpheus, he likewise had power over wild animals\*.

When Pythagoras was travelling with a native of Sybaris, along the sea shore, to Croton, he told some fishermen who were dragging a net full of fishes, the exact number that it contained, on their promising that they would do whatever he should direct with respect to them, if he told them right. Accordingly, when they had counted them,

\* Porphyrius de vita Pythagoræ, c. 24, 25, p. 31. Jamblichus, c. 13, p. 46.



them, and found the number to be what he had said, he ordered them to throw them back into the sea alive; and it was very remarkable, say these writers, that notwithstanding the time which was employed in counting such a number of fishes upon the sea shore, not one of them died\*.

Pythagoras, they also say, proved by undeniable evidence that he was the same person with Euphorbus, the son of Panthus, who was slain by Menelaus, at the siege of Troy, after having killed Patroclus; his soul having transmigrated from one body to another†.

Though these writers appeal to "many ancient and excellent men who wrote the history of "Pythagoras," they do not mention any of them; and it is remarkable that Diogenes Laertius, who wrote the life of Pathagoras about one hundred and fifty years before these authors, has none of these prodigies, except the story of Euphorbus.

The miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus are not less ridiculous than those that are related of Pythagoras, and as destitute of proper vouchers. Philostratus, who wrote his life, did it, as he says, with a view to shew that he was a more extraordinary man than Pythagoras, and more divine with respect to philosophy. According to him, Damis,

\* Porphyrius, c. 25, p. 31. Jamblichus, c. 8, p. 47,

† Ibid. c. 26; p. 32.

Ibid. c. 14 p. 48.

mis, the companion of Apollonius, committed to writing whatever he said, or did, that was remarkable ; that a friend of this Damis (whose name is not mentioned) committed these memoirs to Julia, the wife of the emperor Severus ; and she gave them to Philostratus, to transcribe and reduce into better order. In these circumstances it can hardly be supposed but that he would endeavour to acquit himself in such a manner as to please this empress, and her son Caracalla, by detracting from christianity, to which they both had a very great aversion. He also says that he was assisted by the books of Maximus of Ægæ, which contained an account of what Apollonius did in that place. Four books of the life of Apollonius were likewise written by Meragenes ; but they were such as our author could not give credit to. Let us now see whether his own accounts be at all more credible.

According to Philostratus, Proteus appeared to the mother of Apollonius before he was born, and told her that she would be delivered of himself. She, not at all terrified at the apparition, asked him who he was ; to which he replied, *an Egyptian god*. But Apollonius, he adds, proved himself to be much superior to Proteus in his knowledge of future events ; for that his predictions were much more numerous than those of Proteus, and that he never failed in his interpretation of mysterious things,

things\*. Before her delivery she was directed by a dream to go and gather flowers in a certain meadow. There she fell asleep, and was surrounded by swans, who disposing themselves in the form of a chorus, set up a great cry, which awaked her, and immediately after this she was delivered. At the same time lightning descended from heaven, but presently ascended again into the higher regions of the atmosphere ; signifying, as our author says, that this child would rise above the earth, and have his habitation near the gods.

Such was the birth of Apollonius, at Tyana in Cappadocia, of which place our author relates several extraordinary things. He more particularly mentions a fountain, the waters of which could not be drank with safety by any perjured person†. While Apollonius was a boy, an Assyrian youth, who had brought himself into a dangerous disease by his debauchery, was directed by the god Æsculapius to apply to him, who by advising temperance, restored him to health‡. Such is the introduction to the life of Apollonius, and the whole work is of a piece with it.

I need not say how little credit is due to such ridiculous stories as these, which are as destitute of any proper evidence, as those in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.

\* Lib. 1. cap. 3. p. 5.

† C. 4. p. 6.

‡ Cap. 6: p. 10.

morphosis. It is not, indeed, probable that they were believed by the writers themselves, or any of their readers. How unnecessary is it then to draw a comparison between them and the miracles of Jesus and the apostles, the accounts of which were written while numberless witnesses of them were living, and which were so well attested, that both before and after the publication of those books, thousands abandoned every thing that they had in the world, and many of them cheerfully laid down their lives, for their faith in them ; and yet it cannot be said that any of these persons had been previously disposed to admit the truth of the facts.

PERIOD.

P E R I O D VI.

OF THE PERSECUTION UNDER DIOCLETIAN,  
A. D. 302, AND TO THE SETTLEMENT OF THE  
EMPIRE UNDER CONSTANTINE, A. D. 313.

**T**HIS is the shortest period into which I have hitherto divided this history, but it is by far the most crowded with events, and those of the greatest consequence, and it terminated in the complete establishment of a state of things, the like of which had never been known before ; in one respect highly favourable to christianity, I mean in the general acknowledgment of its truth, but highly unfavourable with regard to its effects on the hearts and lives of men. This period also terminated in the union of christianity with a power the most heterogeneous to its nature, by which it became the reverse of what it had been hitherto, viz. *a kingdom of this world*, arming itself with its powers and terrors, and by degrees exercising that temporal power with as much cruelty against a purer species of christianity, as it had ever been employed against christianity itself.

Previous

Previous to this last struggle between christianity and heathenism, the christian church had, with little interruption, enjoyed more than half a century of rest and peace, in which it had enlarged its boundaries, and acquired a degree of external splendour unknown in any former period\*. Several of the emperors had been well disposed towards it, and though they did not embrace christianity themselves they made no scruple of employing christians in the most important departments of government, both civil and military ; and had excused them from the performance of any acts which had formerly been indispensable in the execution of their offices, if they objected to them as inconsistent with their profession of christianity.

Several of the emperors had indulged their christian officers and their families with the most public exercise of their religion, and among these Eusebius particularly mentions Dorotheus and Gorgonius,

\* Arnobius speaks of the knowledge of christianity having reached the Seres or Chinese, as well as the Persians and the Medes. Lib. ii. p. 30. Mr. D. Guignes has endeavoured to prove that one of the Chinese emperors, having heard of it by the people of India trading to China, sent persons into the West to collect a more authentic account of it, A. D. 65, but that, not making sufficient distinction, they brought back the religion of Fo, which had its origin about that time. *Histoire des Huns*. Vol. i. p. 30. But I do not lay much stress on this account.

Gorgonius, who, with many others, were advanced to the highest magistracies, and the government of provinces. Many heathen governors also shewed great respect to christian bishops, and permitted them to erect new and more spacious edifices for their public assemblies, as the demand for them kept increasing, and the rites of the heathen religion became more neglected and disused. We may therefore conclude, that at this time a very great proportion of the people, in all the provinces of the empire, especially in the East, made open profession of christianity.

But this state of prosperity had produced, as before, many bad, as well as many good effects. The christian bishops and people, having no foreign enemies, were divided among themselves; and the affectionate love and sympathy, which had been cherished by common difficulties, had given place to jealousy, envy, and hatred; which, as Eusebius expresses it, led them to fight with words, as with swords and spears.\* Also, a spirit of indifference with respect to religion in general, and an attachment to the world and the things of it, the fruitful parent of all vices, infected christians as well as other persons, when persecution had ceased to keep up their zeal, and to compel them, as it were, to look from earth to heaven.

At length, however, it pleased Divine Providence

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 1, p. 375.

dence to rouse the christian church from this state of indifference and worldly mindedness, by the most severe, and the longest continued persecution to which it had ever been exposed. And by this it appeared, that notwithstanding the diseases which it had contracted in a state of indolence, its *stamina* were good ; for it not only survived, but was improved by the trial. The return of persecution revived the ancient spirit of christians, and no more account was made by them of torture and death, than on any former similar occasion.

This persecution is usually ascribed to Diocletian, but it was more properly a measure of Galerius Maximian, his son-in-law, and one of the Cæsars ; and it is said that, for some time, Diocletian remonstrated against the proposal, on account of the miseries that he foresaw it would produce. For though he was superstitious, and a friend to the ancient religion (which was supposed to be connected with the welfare and glory of the empire, which he had much at heart) he was not naturally cruel. Moreover, the persecution did not begin, at least it was not carried on with any violence, till the nineteenth year of his reign, a few years before he resigned the government intirely, and it continued seven years, after he had nothing to do with the administration, and when it does not appear, that he interested himself at all in it.

It



It appears, however, that Diocletian, in conjunction with his colleague, Maximian Herculus, had shewn himself unfavourable to the christians, on some occasions before the breaking out of the great persecution which bears his name.\* It is said, that at the meeting of the two emperors at Milan, which was the year before the adoption of the two Cæsars, and the sixth of the reign of Diocletian, they concerted some measures that were hostile to christianity;† and when ten years of the joint reign of Diocletian and Maximian were expired, solemn games, in honour of the heathen gods were celebrated, with sacrifices, through all the provinces, by Diocletian at Nicomedia, and by Maximian at Rome, which shews their attachment to their ancient rites.

\* Epiphanius, H. 66. Opera, Vol. i.

† De Mortibus Persecutorum, Cap. 8,

## SECTION I.

*Of the Progress of the Persecution in general.*

EUSEBIUS observes, that the persecution began in the army, before the publication of the edicts which made it general; the officers being obliged to resign their commands, if they would not sacrifice to the heathen gods. Many, however, not only resigned their rank in the army upon this occasion, but suffered death; till one of their commanders was deterred from proceeding any farther, by the prodigious numbers who offered themselves to him, as ready to die when they were thus called upon\*.

In the fourteenth year of Diocletian and Maximian, they made a magnificent triumph together at Rome, for their signal success in re-establishing the affairs of the empire, and from this time Diocletian affected to be called *Jovius*, and Maximian *Herculius*, and their pride and arrogance was from this time visibly increased. But it was not till the nineteenth year of Diocletian, when the emperors

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 4. p. 380.

perors were established in full power, when the empire had no rebellion within itself, nor any war with its neighbours, that they formed the serious design of extirpating the christian religion; imagining, it may be presumed, that till this was done, the prosperity of the state could not be said to be stable, the safety and grandeur of the empire being supposed to depend upon the observance of those rites, to which the Romans had been addicted when the empire was established.

It was this idea that misled Trajan, Marcus Antoninus, and other emperors, before Diocletian; and their failure of success in exterminating christianity did not deter these two from making the attempt; imagining, no doubt, that notwithstanding the great increase of christians, they were possessed of advantages sufficient to counterbalance that circumstance; and seeing that if the evil, as they thought it, was suffered to proceed much farther, it would be too late to attempt the suppression of it. It is also said, in Eusebius's life of Constantine\*, that Apollo was reported to have complained out of a cavern, that his oracles were silent, or uncertain, on account of some *just men*; and that on this account the emperor (supposing that by *just men* must be understood *the christians*) was incited to begin the persecution.

By

By the first edict, which was published just before Easter, A. D. 303, at Nicomedia, where Diocletian and Galerius then were, it was ordered, that all christian churches should be demolished to their foundations, that the sacred books of the christians should be burned, that those christians who enjoyed any honours should be deprived of them, and that private persons should be reduced to servitude, if they did not renounce christianity\*. No sooner was this edict set up, than a person of considerable rank, and intemperate zeal, pulled it down, and tore it. Being immediately seized, and put to death by torture, he expressed the greatest composure and joy to his last breath†.

Not long after appeared another edict, by which all the bishops, and the other clergy, were ordered to be committed to prison, and compelled to sacrifice to the heathen gods‡; and this was followed by a third, in which it was ordered, that they who refused to sacrifice, should be exposed to torture§.

With respect to the particulars of this famous persecution, I shall strictly follow Eusebius, who declares, that he relates what passed under his own eyes. He himself, he says, was present when the churches were demolished, and the books of scripture

\* Euseb. Lib. viii. Cap. 2. p. 379.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 5. p. 381.

‡ Ibid. Cap. 3. p. 379.

§ Ibid. p. 383.

ture committed to the flames. In this persecution some of the clergy concealed themselves, others were apprehended, and exposed to various insults, many had not fortitude to bear the trial, and many had recourse, as in the preceeding persecution, to various artifices, in order to be thought to have sacrificed when they really had not\*.

When Eusebius proceeds to mention particular cases, he begins with those who suffered in the emperor's household, and says, that Dorotheus, and other youths of the bed-chamber, who had been particularly favoured and esteemed by the emperors, preferred every species of torture to the honours with which they had been invested. To enable us to judge of what was endured by the rest, he says that one of them, whose name was Peter, being brought before the emperors, and refusing to sacrifice, was first stripped naked, and then cruelly scourged till his bones were laid bare. This having no effect, he was washed with vinegar and salt, and afterwards gradually roasted on a gridiron, persisting in his profession of christianity to the last. Dorotheus and Gorgonius, with many others who belonged to the palace, after enduring various tortures, were strangled; and Anthimius, the bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded.

After

\* Euseb. Cap. 3. 7. 379.

After this the palace being on fire, and the christians being said to be the incendiaries, all the christians in the place were, by the order of the emperors, killed in crowds together with their families ; some by the sword, and others by fire ; and upon this occasion many persons of both sexes voluntarily rushed into the flames. Many were thrown bound into the sea, and some who had been interred, were taken out of their graves, and thrown into the sea also.

This passed at Nicomedia, at the beginning of the persecution ; and when the same orders were carried into Armenia, and Syria, an incredible number of persons were thrown into prison, so that those places which used to be occupied by murderers, and villains of every species, were now filled with bishops and clergy ; and there was no room left for those who were condemned for crimes. It is impossible, he says, to compute the number of martyrs in each province, especially in Africa proper, and Mauritania, Thebais, and Egypt, and many persons flying from Egypt were put to death in other provinces.\*

Some of these, Eusebius says, he himself saw exposed to various kinds of torture, and some thrown to wild beasts, at Tyre. On this occasion many of the beasts, he says, would not hurt them, but turned upon those who incited them. He particularly

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 6, p. 381.

particularly mentions a young man, not twenty years of age, who stood without moving from his place, and holding his hands in the form of a cross, when a wild beast rushing towards him, suddenly retired. A bull being let loose upon five persons, did not hurt any of them, but threw several of their enemies into the air, and tore them. After this, other beasts were let loose upon them; but this not succeeding, they were put to death by the sword, and thrown into the sea\*. All these were persons who had fled from Egypt.

In Egypt itself, Eusebius says, there were men innumerable, with their wives and their children, put to death; and that after being made to endure cruel scourgings, and all kinds of torture, dreadful to hear of, they were either thrown into the fire or drowned. Some cheerfully presented their heads to be struck off, some expired under the torture, and some were famished to death. Others were crucified, some in the manner that is most usual with malefactors, but others in a more cruel way, with their heads downwards, in which posture they were suffered to live till they died of hunger†.

But the tortures exercised on the christians of Thebais exceeded all the rest. Some had their flesh torn with sharp shells till they died; women,

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap 7. p. 324.

† Ibid. Cap. 8. p. 385.

half naked, were tied by one foot, with their heads downwards, and suspended upon high machines. Others were put to death by having their limbs torn asunder by branches of trees, to which they had been fastened, while they were bent with great violence, and then suffered to resume their natural position. These tortures were continued not a few days only, or a short space of time, but year after year; and thirty, sixty, or a hundred, men, women, and children, were sometimes put to death in different ways on one day. Eusebius himself saw many heaps of those who had been killed in a single day, some beheaded, and others burned. On this occasion the swords of the executioners were blunted or broken, and some being weary they were succeeded by others.

Notwithstanding these cruelties, so great was the ardour of the christians, that no sooner were some dispatched from the tribunals, than others presented themselves, professing that they were christians, as Eusebius himself was witness; rejoicing when they heard their sentence pronounced, and singing psalms and hymns to their last breath. Some of these were rich and noble, and others distinguished for their eloquence and their knowledge of philosophy. Of this class was Philoromus, who was a chief magistrate in Alexandria, and had sat as a judge himself, surrounded by guards. Such also was Phileas, bishop of Thmuis, a man  
eminent



eminent for philosophy. These two were surrounded by numerous relations and friends, who joined with the judge himself, in entreating them to have compassion on themselves, their wives, and children; but it was without effect, and with the greatest composure they submitted to have their heads struck off\*.

From an epistle of this Phileas to a person in Thmuis, Eusebius gives an account of the tortures inflicted upon the christians in Alexandria. In this place some were killed with clubs, and others in different methods of scourging. Some, with their hands tied behind them, were suspended on large stakes, and then had all their limbs violently stretched by machines. To some the executioners applied the instruments of torture, not to their sides only, which had been usual in the case of murderers, but to all parts of their bodies, their bellies, legs, knees, &c. Some were suspended by one hand to the porticos, and others on posts, with their faces towards each other, and their feet not touching the ground, and in this posture they were suffered to continue not only while the judge was speaking to them, but almost the whole day. For while he went to attend others, his ministers remained with the first, to release any who being overcome by the violence of their sufferings, should retract their confession.

Some

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap, 9, p. 385.

Some were so tortured in the stocks, that they were afterwards unable to stand at all ; and many exhibited a more frightful spectacle with their bruises, scars and distortions, when they were recovered, than they had done during the torture itself. Some expired under the torture, and others in prison afterwards. Some, who with great difficulty had been cured of their wounds and dislocations, being required to chuse again, whether they would sacrifice or die, with the greatest cheerfulness chose the latter ; mindful, as the writer says, of the command not to worship any God but one. Such is the account of Phileas, written not with a view to discourage those to whom he wrote, but to teach them, by these heroic examples to make light of any sufferings in so glorious a cause. \*

We have a particular account† of two martyrdoms in Africa in this persecution, one of Maximilian, a young man of Teveste, and the other of Felix, bishop of Tubysa, in Numidia. The former, being chosen to serve in the army, refused ; saying that he was a christian, and that, as such, it was not lawful for him to do it. Being told that there were many christians who served in the army of Maximian, Constantius, and Maximus, he

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 10, p. 388.

† This account is taken from an ancient MS. and is subjoined to the Oxford edition of the tract ascribed to Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*. 1680.

he said that others might do what they thought proper, but that he could not do what he thought to be wrong. Being then sentenced to be beheaded for refusing the military oath, he said *Thanks be to God*, which seems to have been the answer that the christians generally returned when they received their sentence.

At the place of execution he exhorted his brother to act as he had done, and desired his father to give the new suit of cloaths (which had been prepared for him with a view to his going into the army) to the person who was to perform the office of his executioner. Pomponia, a christian matron, conveyed the body to Carthage, and deposited it near that of Cyprian, and dying herself thirteen days after, she was buried with them. The father of Maximilian also gave God thanks for the honour that his son had received, and followed him not long after.

In the eighth consulship of Diocletian, and the seventh of Maximian, an order being issued to burn the sacred books of the christians, and published at Tubyza in Numidia, Magnilianus the governor of the city ordered first some presbyters, and then Felix the bishop, of the place, to be brought before him ; and having recited the imperial edict, he required him to give up the books which belonged to his church that they might be burned. But on his declaring that he would rather give his  
own

own body to be burned, he was sent to Carthage to the lieutenant of Anulinus the proconsul, and giving the same answer there, he was put into the lowest prison, and after being confined in it sixteen days, he was brought before Anulinus himself, who sent him to Rome; and thence the prefect of the city sent him, loaded with heavy irons, to the emperor at Nola. Being then brought before the proper judge, and persisting in his refusal to give up the sacred books, he was sentenced to be beheaded. For this he returned God thanks, as was usual; and after being allowed to pray, the sentence was executed on the eighteenth of the calends of February, and his remains were carried by his fellow christians to Carthage. He was fifty six years of age.

In Phrygia there was a town, which, because it consisted wholly of christians, the magistrates themselves as well as the other inhabitants (for they had with one voice refused to sacrifice) was surrounded with soldiers, who set fire to it, and burned it, together with all its inhabitants, men, women and children. In this province Adauctus, who had been advanced through all the dignities of the state till he was made procurator, and then held the office of treasurer, suffered martyrdom\*.

Here our historian says it would be impossible to recite the sufferings of the christian martyrs, or  
to

\* Euseb. Hist. Mib. viii. Cap. 11. p. 390.

to describe the various tortures to which they were exposed. In some places they were generally beheaded, as in Arabia ; in some they were left to die with their limbs broken, as in Cappadocia ; in some they were suspended by the feet, with their heads downwards, and in this situation a fire was made under them till they were suffocated with the smoke, as was done in Mesopotamia ; in some places their noses, ears, hands, and other limbs, were cut off, as at Alexandria ; in other places they were roasted, but not suffered to die, on a gridiron. Others chose to put their right hands into the fire rather than sacrifice, and some being pursued threw themselves headlong from high buildings rather than fall into the hands of their enemies.

One woman of rank and fortune at Antioch being apprehended. with two beautiful daughters, who dreaded violation more than any thing else they could suffer, having got leave from the soldiers, to whose custody they had been committed, to withdraw a little, threw themselves into the river and were drowned. Two other women of the same place, sisters, distinguished by their birth, fortune, and every accomplishment, were thrown into the sea.\*

The sufferings of the martyrs in Pontus, Eusebius says, were particularly frightful. In this province

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 12, p. 391.

province some had reeds thrust under the nails of all their fingers, some had melted lead poured upon them; and others were tortured in the most horrible manner in their private parts, and their bowels; their judges as it were contending with each other, who should excel the rest in the invention of tortures. At length, being tired of these cruelties, they desisted of themselves from inflicting capital punishments, as if by a special favour of the emperors, and contented themselves with putting out the eyes of some, and laming others, which was the gentlest of their punishments. But it was impossible to give the number of those whose right eyes were first put out, and then had cauteries applied to them, and who were afterwards sent to the mines in the province. These sufferings, the historian says, were borne with such fortitude, as filled the whole world with the highest admiration.

In a separate chapter Eusebius recites the sufferings of the bishops, and some of the superior clergy. Anthimius bishop of Nicomedia, as mentioned before, was beheaded. Of the Antiochians was Lucien a presbyter, a man of exemplary piety, who delivered an apology to the emperors at Nicomedia, and suffered there. In Phœnicia, Tyrannio bishop of Tyre, and Zenobius bishop of Sidon, were martyrs; as also Sylvanus bishop of Emesa, who was thrown to the wild beasts, together

er with some other persons of the same place. The two others suffered at Antioch, Tyrannio being thrown into the sea, and Zenobius (who was an excellent physician) dying under torture with iron hooks.

Among the clergy of Palestine who were martyrs was Sylvanus, bishop of Gaza, who, with thirty-nine other persons was beheaded in the mines of Phænus. In the same place the Egyptian bishops Peleus and Nilus, with some other persons were burned. But none appeared to our author to deserve a higher commendation than Pamphilus, a presbyter of Cæsarea, of whose sufferings an account will be given in another place.

Of the martyrs among the clergy in Egypt, was Peter bishop of Alexandria, with the presbyters Dios and Ammonius, and likewise Phileas, Hefychius, Pachumius, and Theodorus, all bishops of different cities. There were also, he says, six hundred others by no means obscure persons, belonging to different churches in Egypt, the particulars of whose sufferings he leaves to be related by those who were eye-witnesses of them; he himself proposing to give a like particular account of those martyrs of whose sufferings he himself was witness, in a separate work, viz. of the martyrs of Palestine\*,

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 18, p. 393.

This was the first persecution, in which, by the orders of government, an attempt was made to destroy the sacred books of the christians. And Mosheim, with great probability, conjectures that Hierocles, or some other learned heathen, suggested this measure ; and he supposes that many valuable treatises may have been lost in consequence of it. This may have been the case with respect to some books of which there were few copies, or to the original copies of the books of the New Testament ; but there were at this time too many copies of the scriptures (the books which the christians valued most) for such an order to have any effect. On the contrary, the natural consequence of such a measure would be, that books of value would be concealed with greater care, and more copies would be taken of them than ever.

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SECTION II.

*Of the Conduct of the Heathen Philosophers, and of the first Stop that was put to the Persecution.*

**I**T is remarkable that we have no example of any heathen philosopher pleading in favour of toleration, or expressing any compassion for the sufferings of christians, in this persecution, or any of the preceding ones. On the contrary, like Marcus Antoninus, who holds a high rank among philosophers, as well as of emperors, they bore the most implicable hatred to the christians, and rejoiced in every event that was unfavourable to them. For notwithstanding many of the learned christians retained, or adopted, the principles of Plato, or those of some other philosophers (some species of philosophy being the most important articles of liberal education in those days, and without some knowledge of which no person was considered as having any pretensions to scholarship) and though by incorporating platonism with christianity many of the learned, who gave some attention to the historical evidences of christianity, were, no doubt, brought to think better of it, and  
even

even to embrace it ; yet the conduct of all christian teachers was so much the reverse of that of mere philosophers, that they could not but remain hostile to each other.

The christians not only inculcated doctrines of infinitely more importance than any of the philosophers pretended to, and with an evidence that was level to the plainest capacities, but they took pains to teach the unlearned among the common people, whom the philosophers held in great contempt, as unworthy their instructions. According to the principles of christianity, all mankind without any distinction of high or low, rich or poor, are equally candidates for a happy immortality ; and in this great respect, compared to which all other distinctions are of no moment whatever, the meanest slaves are equal to their masters. Before such a system as this the boasted superiority of philosophers to peasants or mechanics absolutely vanished. They therefore felt their pride mortified, and saw themselves and the science they pretended to, eclipsed by the illiterate among the common people, whom they had so much despised. In this state of mind they consoled themselves with affecting to despise those who despised them ; and without demeaning themselves to examine the historical evidence of the facts on which christianity is founded, they superciliously contented themselves with considering it is a *new thing*, brought  
into

into the world by obscure persons, with a crucified malefactor and some fishermen, at its head ; and with saying that it was impossible that such people as these should teach the world any thing new, or important.

Besides, the heathen philosophers, how much soever some of them might despise the superstitious rites of their country, universally conformed to them, and promoted the observance of them in others ; and many of them were, no doubt, seriously persuaded that things of such venerable antiquity were of a sacred nature, and in some unknown manner connected with the well being of states. Being ignorant of true science, and the real laws of nature, philosophers themselves, as they were called, were as superstitious as the lowest of the vulgar, believing in omens, and the power of charms and magic. Of this every age, even so late as that of Julian, in which more good sense might have been expected, furnishes abundant proof. On this account the philosophy of Marcus Antoninus, and of Julian did not emancipate their minds from the most absurd superstitions, or dispose them to humanity with respect to men who entertained opinions different from theirs, though they were guilty of no offences against society, or the state ; and they were only the more provoked to find them to be such men as a regard to

to God and conscience rendered superior to their threats.

The first stop that was put to this cruel persecution was the effect of a superstition, similar to that which had occasioned it. Galerius Maximian, by whose instigation the measure had been adopted, being seized with a dreadful ulcer in his anus, which affected all the neighbouring parts, and almost his whole body (so that it bred worms, and the stench of it was so offensive as to be insupportable to his nearest domestics) having found the aid of his physicians, and also his prayers and his sacrifices to the heathen gods, unavailable, at length published a rescript in favour of the christians, A. D. 311.

In this rescript we see the true principle of the persecutions, viz. that it was intended to restore the antient rites, in order to establish the prosperity of the state. We likewise see in it a confession of an inability to succeed in that measure, notwithstanding all the violence with which it had been carried on, and that though some had been induced to abandon christianity, they did not therefore become worshippers of the heathen gods, but threw aside all regard to religion. On these accounts the emperor abandoned the measure, and he endeavoured to do it in such a manner as to gain some credit for his clemency. Withal he entertained some hope that when all other help failed,

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he might be relieved by the God of the christians, whom he desired to intercede for him. As this rescript is most curious and important, I shall give the whole of it nearly in the translation of Dr. Lardner.

“ The emperor Cæsar Galerius Valerius Maximian, invincible, august, high-priest, to the people. Among other things which we have ordered, with a view to the benefit and prosperity of the public, we did, indeed, formerly strive to correct all things according to the antient laws, and established constitution of the Romans ; and among other things that the christians who had forsaken the religion of their ancestors, should return to a right mind ; forasmuch as by some means such an obstinacy had seized them, and such was their folly, that they followed not the institutions of the ancients, which possibly some of their own ancestors had appointed, but according to their fancy, and just as they pleased, they made laws for themselves, to be observed and followed by them ; and in many places they drew over multitudes of people to follow their customs. Wherefore, when after we had published our edict that they should return to the institutions of the ancients, many have been exposed to danger, and many have been greatly afflicted, and have undergone various kinds of deaths ; and forasmuch as great multitudes per-

“ fist

"list in their opinions, and we have perceived that  
 "they give not due worship and reverence to the  
 "immortal gods, nor yet worship the God of the  
 "christians ; We, duly considering our accustomed  
 "mildness and humanity, with which we are  
 "wont to dispense pardon to all men, have thought  
 "proper readily to hold forth to them our indul-  
 "gence, that they may at length be christians, and  
 "that they may rebuild the houses in which they  
 "have used to assemble, provided they do nothing  
 "contrary to good government. By another letter  
 "we shall make known our pleasure to the judges,  
 "for the direction of their conduct. Wherefore,  
 "agreeable to this our indulgence, they ought to  
 "pray to their God for our welfare, and for that of  
 "the public, and for their own ; that on all sides  
 "the public may be preserved in safety, and they  
 "may live securely in their own habitations\*."

This edict, which was published at Nicomedia  
 on the last day of April, A. D. 311, did not proceed  
 from any remorse of conscience, to which Eusebi-  
 us ascribes it ; but, as Mosheim justly observes, it  
 was suggested by superstition, and we may add  
 by despair of gaining his object. Maximian did  
 not long survive this edict ; and its beneficial ef-  
 fects, as Eusebius observest, were not universal.  
 For Maximin who ruled in the East, not approv-  
 ing

\* Heathen Testimonies, Vol. iii. p. 296.

† Euseb. Hib. Lib. ix. Cap. 1. p. 439.

ing of it, did not publish it in the proper forms, but only mentioned it to some of the governors, as they did to others. However Sabinus, the prætorian prefect wrote to all the governors of provinces, signifying that, since it had been found impossible to reduce the christians by any means to the obedience of the laws, they should not be any more molested. On this the persecution ceased, the christians were restored to their churches, and those who had been condemned to the mines were set at liberty\*.

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### SECTION III.

*The Renewal of the Persecution, and the final Cessation of it.*

**T**HIS favourable state of things did not continue more than six months. And as a pretence for resuming the persecution, Maximin, who had been created Cæsar in A. D. 306, and who governed in the East, procured formal applications

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. ix. Cap. 1, p. 410.

to be made to him from Antioch, and other cities, requesting that no christians might be permitted to reside in them. His chief agent in this business at Antioch, was Theotecnus, a bitter and crafty enemy of the christians, who had consecrated a statue to Jupiter Philius, and who pretended that it had given out an oracle to this purpose\*. The emperor readily complied with the prayers which he himself had suggested, and the heathen rites being restored with great zeal in all places, the persecution of the christians was resumed†.

Eusebius then relates a singular contrivance of the heathens to discredit christianity. They published fictitious *Memoirs of Pilate*, and distributed copies of them through all the provinces subject to Maximin, with orders that they should be taught to children in the schools. Also some women of Damascus were prevailed upon by threats, to give evidence that the christians of that city were guilty of those abominable actions, which had so often been laid to their charge. These allegations were likewise added to the *Memoirs*, and by order of the prince they were likewise published in all places‡. Some of the persons who had been most active in procuring these allegations afterwards laid violent hands upon themselves.

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\* Euseb. Lib. ix. Cap. 3. p. 442.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. ix. Cap. 4. p. 442.

‡ Ibid. Lib. ix. Cap. 5. p. 443.



The persecution being thus resumed, three persons, who confessed that they were christians, at Emesa (one of them Sylvanus, who had been bishop of the place forty years) were thrown to the wild beasts. At the same time Peter, who had with great reputation been bishop of Alexandria, was, by the especial order of Maximin, beheaded; and in the same manner were other Egyptian bishops put to death. And Lucian, a presbyter of Antioch, mentioned before (the same who is said to have been at the head of the unitarians there) being carried to Nicomedia, where Maximin then was, was put to death in prison\*. The rescripts of the emperors against the christians were also by order of Maximin, engraved on brass, and set up in the cities, which had never been done before, and they were read in the schools along with the Memoirs of Pilate above mentioned.

A copy of this emperor's rescript, addressed to the people of Tyre, with respect to what they had decreed against the christians, is given by Eusebius from the table of brass on which it was engraved; and as it shews the true spirit of heathenism more distinctly than any other public monument of the kind, I shall give the whole of it nearly in the translation of Dr. Lardner.

" Now, at length the impudent confidence of  
 " men, having once shaken off the dark mists of  
 " error

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. ix, Cap. 6, p. 444.

“ error and ignorance, which for a time blinded  
“ the minds of men, rather miserable than wicked,  
“ may discern that the world is governed by the  
“ indulgent providence of the immortal gods. It  
“ is impossible to say how grateful, how delightful,  
“ how acceptable, your pious resolution for the  
“ honour of the gods has been to us. Nor was it  
“ before unknown to any, how great is your re-  
“ spect and veneration for the gods, which have  
“ been manifested not by vain words only, but  
“ also by great works ; on which account your  
“ city may be deservedly stiled the seat and habita-  
“ tion of the immortal gods ; and it is evident by  
“ many proofs, that she flourishes by the advent  
“ and presence of the heavenly deities. And now  
“ your city, negligent of your own particular inter-  
“ est, and no longer sending to me the requests  
“ which you were formerly wont to send, condu-  
“ cive to your own prosperity ; when it perceived  
“ that the promoters of the detestable vanity began  
“ to creep abroad again, and that like fire careless-  
“ ly raked up, it broke out with redoubled vio-  
“ lence, immediately without delay, you had re-  
“ course to our piety, as the metropolis of all re-  
“ ligion, requesting redress and assistance ; nor can  
“ it be doubted that this wholesome design has  
“ been put into your minds by the immortal gods,  
“ for the sake of your pious regard for them.  
“ The most high and most mighty Jupiter, who  
“ presides

" presides in your famous city, who preserves  
 " your country gods, your wives, your children,  
 " your families, and houses, from destruction, has  
 " suggested this petition to you. He it is who has  
 " breathed into your minds this salutary resolu-  
 " tion, evidently shewing how excellent, and no-  
 " ble, and profitable, it is to worship him, and to  
 " perform the sacred rites and ceremonies of the  
 " immortal gods with due veneration. Who can  
 " be so void of all sense and reason, as not to  
 " know, that it is owing to the propitious favour  
 " and bounty of the gods towards us, that the earth  
 " does not neglect to restore to us the seeds com-  
 " mitted to it, that the hope of the husbandman  
 " is not disappointed, that the aspect of destructive  
 " war is not immoveably fixed on the earth, that  
 " our bodies are not destroyed by the intemper-  
 " ance of the air, that the sea is not perpetually  
 " tossed and made to overflow with stormy winds,  
 " and that the earth the mother and nurse of all  
 " things, is not rent asunder by agitations within  
 " its own bowels, and mountains swallowed up  
 " by vast and unexpected scissures? There is no  
 " man who does not know that all these, and worse  
 " calamities, have heretofore often happened; and  
 " they have befallen us on account of the pernici-  
 " ous error, and empty vanity, of those execrable  
 " men, which are so spread as to cover almost the  
 " whole

“ whole earth with shame and dishonour.” After some other things, he adds,

“ Let men now look into the open fields, and  
 “ see the flourishing corn waving its full ears ; let  
 “ them see the meadows bedecked with plants and  
 “ flowers, that have been watered with seasonable  
 “ rain ; let them observe the calm and agreeable  
 “ temperature of the air ; let all men, therefore,  
 “ henceforth rejoice, that by your piety and res-  
 “ pect for the sacred rites of religion, the deity of  
 “ the most valiant and most potent Mars has been  
 “ appeased, and that they may now securely enjoy  
 “ the benefits of a profound and delightful peace.  
 “ As many have forsaken that blind error, and  
 “ intricate maze of vanity, and are returned to a  
 “ right and sound mind, let them rejoice abun-  
 “ dantly, as men delivered from a dangerous tem-  
 “ pest, or a grievous disease, and who have now  
 “ before them the prospect of a pleasant and com-  
 “ fortable life for the time to come. But if any  
 “ still persist in their vain and detestable folly, let  
 “ them be expelled far away from your city and  
 “ country, as you have desired ; that thus, confor-  
 “ mable to your laudable care in this matter, your  
 “ city being purged from all defilement and wick-  
 “ edness, you may according to your own genu-  
 “ ine disposition, with all due veneration and so-  
 “ lemnity, perform the sacred rites of the immor-  
 “ tal gods. And that you may know how grate-  
 “ ful

“ful this your petition has been to me, and that,  
 “without decrees and without petitions, I am of  
 “myself forward to encourage well disposed minds,  
 “we permit you to ask the greatest benefit you  
 “can ask, as a reward for so religious a purpose.  
 “Take care that you ask immediately, and that  
 “you receive what you ask ; for you shall obtain  
 “it without delay ; which benefit, bestowed up-  
 “on your city, shall be henceforward, throughout  
 “all time, a monument of your devout piety for  
 “the immortal gods, and shall declare to your  
 “children and posterity, that you have received  
 “from our hands a recompence of your love and  
 “virtue\*.”

We here see all kinds of temporal prosperity most confidently ascribed to the influence of the heathen gods, in consequence of the observance of the ancient rites, and on the other hand, every species of temporal calamity is ascribed to the neglect of those rites, in consequence of the general spread of christianity, which is here clearly acknowledged, and grievously lamented. This rescript, Eusebius says, was fixed up on pillars in every province, so as to take from the christians, as far as the power of man could go, all hope of a favourable turn to their affairs.

We have seen an inscription in honour of Nero, as having extirpated christianity out of Spain,  
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\* Testimonies, Vol. iii. p. 316.

Two inscriptions have also been discovered which ascribe the same success to Diocletian, Maximian, and Galerius, expressing that, "the name of the christians, who had overturned the state, was extinguished\*." How easy is it to flatter princes with accomplishing what is above their power? So far was this persecution, notwithstanding its long continuance and severity, from extirpating christianity, that it was the means of giving it a firmer establishment than ever it had before, and of extending the bounds of it. The constancy of the martyrs could not but astonish many of the heathens, and it convinced great numbers, that so remarkable an effect, a thing unknown to the world before, must have some solid cause. This would lead them to inquire into the nature and evidence of christianity, and the consequence of this with respect to great numbers was a persuasion of its truth. Many of the persecuted christians also fled into distant countries, and by this means carried the knowledge of christianity whither it would not otherwise have reached so soon. However, while the emperor's servants were executing their orders in the provinces, and the christians despaired of all aid, the tyrant was curbed, and the most unexpected relief was afforded them†.

As

\* Testimonies, Vol. ii. p. 321.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 7, p. 447.

As if it had been the design of providence to contradict the vain pretensions of Maximin, with respect to the uninterrupted prosperity which he confidently expected from the restoration of the rites of the heathen worship, there presently followed a total failure of the usual quantity of rain, to which succeeded a famine, attended, as usual, by a dreadful pestilence, the effects of which are particularly described by Eusebius. Maximin was also worsted in a war which he carried on against the Armenians, who were generally christians, and whom he had endeavoured to bring back by force to the worship of the heathen gods. In the ravages of this pestilence the christians were distinguished by their care of the sick, and the burial of the dead, as they have been observed to be on a former occasion ; while the heathens shamefully neglected these duties ; and this, being observed, operated greatly in favour of christianity, as the religion which alone could inspire such humanity and courage\*.

Soon after these events arrived the news of the defeat of Maxentius by Constantine and Licinius, and their rescript in favour of the christians ; giving to them, and to all the subjects of the empire, a complete toleration with respect to every thing relating to religion, and restoring to them their places of public worship, and all the possessions of which they had been deprived in the course of the

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Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 8, p. 448.

late persecution. Maximin, finding himself unable to oppose them; and reduced to the necessity of complying with their measures, now published a rescript of his own, by which he exempted all christians from punishment, but without expressly permitting them to rebuild their churches, or to resume their public worship. The christians, therefore, apprehending such a change in his conduct as had taken place before, put no confidence in his promises, which were evidently the effect of compulsion\*.

After this Maximin made war upon Licinius, and being worsted in it, he first of all put to death the priests and prophets of the heathen gods; by whose vain promises he had undertaken the war, as if they had been conjurors and traitors; and then giving glory, as Eusebius says, to the God of the christians, he published an unexceptionable rescript in their favour, giving them entire liberty to rebuild their churches, and restoring to them whatever lands, or other property, had been confiscated. Soon after this he died of a grievous disease. But Lactantius says, that he was seized with this disease before the publication of this last edict, and that he implored the forgiveness of the christians, praying for relief from his distemper.†

Maximin

\* Euseb. Lib. viii. Cap. 9. p. 455.

† De Mortibus Persecutorum, Cap. 49. p. 90.



Maximin being dead, A. D. 314, he was declared to be a public enemy, in consequence of which his statues were every where thrown down, and those who had taken his part, and who had been his chief instruments in the persecution of the christians, were put to death. Among these was *Piscatus*, for whom he had had a particular friendship, and *Caledonus*, who had distinguished himself by the unbounded slaughter of the christians in Egypt. *Theotecnus* also was put to death, after being first tortured, together with those priests and prophets of Antioch who had been so active in the business of the image and oracle above-mentioned. The children of Maximin also, and his favourites in general, were put to death\*.

Thus ended this great persecution, till it was revived for a short time by *Licinius*, A. D. 316. On his undertaking to contend for the empire with *Constantine*, knowing that the christians would take the part of his rival, he hoped, no doubt, to secure the attachment of the heathens (who in the time of the late persecution were by much the majority of the subjects of the empire) by shewing himself hostile to christianity. He began with expelling all christians from his own family. In the next place he deprived them of all the military honours they had enjoyed in the cities. He then contrived to cut off several of the more eminent bishops

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. ix. Cap. 11, p. 459.

bishops, on other pretences than their being christians ; and he expressly forbade their assembling in synods\*. Some churches in Pontus he shut up, and others he levelled with the ground, on the pretence that it was most favourable to health for such crowds of people to assemble in the open air. He more expressly forbade any women to frequent the places of worship, ordering that they should be instructed by other women at home. He then proceeded to confiscate the goods of christians ; and lastly threatened them with death. At the same time he strictly forbade any persons affording the least relief or assistance to those who should be confined in prison, under the penalty of being subject to the same punishment themselves.

The governors of provinces, seeing the disposition of their master, subjected the bishops to the same punishments with the greatest miscreants, and some were even cut into small pieces, and given for food to feed fishes. On this the christians began to flee once more, and as Eusebius says, the fields and solitudes, the mountains and the forests, received them†. Licinius was proceeding to the greatest extremities in this persecution, when his course was cut short by the victories of Constantine over him.

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\* Vita Const. Lib. i, Cap. 51. p. 527.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. x, Cap. 8, p. 489, &c. Vita Const. Lib. i, Cap. 51, 52, 53. p. 527. Lib. ii, Cap. 1, 2. p. 535

## SECTION IV.

*Of the Martyrs of Palestine.*

**T**HAT we may be able to form a clearer idea of the cruelty and extent of this persecution, I shall give a separate account of the martyrs of Palestine from a particular tract of Eusebius, subjoined to his eighth book of ecclesiastical history. The truth of the facts cannot be questioned, as the author was in the country at the time, and wrote from his own knowledge.

The first of these martyrs was Procopius of Cæsarea, who was beheaded on the seventh of the ides of June, in the first year of the persecution. After him many other clergy of the same province suffered with great constancy. Not a few, however, found their courage fail them. The rest were tortured in various ways ; and some were saved by the by-standers crying out, that they had sacrificed, though they really had not. And though one of them shouted out that he had not sacrificed, he was not allowed to be heard ; of so great account did they make it to induce persons to apostatize, or make it believed that they had done so.

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In consequence of this, out of a considerable number who were accused at one particular time, only two, Alpheus and Zaccheus, suffered ; but they bore various modes of torture, confessing all the while that there was but one God, and one king, the Lord Jesus Christ, and were then beheaded. This was on the fifteenth of the calends of December\*.

On the same day suffered Romanus, a deacon of Cæsarea, at Antioch. That was the day on which the churches were demolished. Seeing the people going in crowds to sacrifice, he was moved with zeal, and could not forbear upbraiding them for their conduct. On this he was seized, and being threatened with fire, heard the sentence with a serene and cheerful countenance ; then being tied to the stake, and the fuel heaped about him, while the officers were waiting for the orders of the emperor, who was present, he himself called for the fire. This being noticed, he was carried before the emperor, and there his tongue was cut out, himself presenting it for the purpose. After this he was thrown into prison, where he was cruelly tortured in the flocks and then strangled. This was in the first year of the persecution, which extended to the bishops and clergy only†.

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 1, p. 407.

† Ibid. Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 2, p. 409.

In the second year the persecution extended to persons of every description, and in this year it was that Timotheus, having borne every kind of torture, was consumed by a slow fire at Gaza, as was mentioned before. At the same time Agapius and Thecla were sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts, and while the people were exulting in the idea of this spectacle, six young men, Timolaus of Pontus, Dionysius of Tripolis, Romulus, a sub-deacon of the church of Diospolis, two Egyptians, Pausis and Alexander, and also another Alexander of Gaza, having first caused their own hands to be tied, as ready for martyrdom, went all together to Urbanus, the governor, who was then going into the amphitheatre, acknowledging themselves to be christians, and shewing that they were not afraid of the wild beasts. The governor and his companions, being astonished at this, ordered them to prison. A few days after, being joined by Agapius, who had borne various kinds of torture, and by Dionysius, who had supplied them with necessaries, they were all beheaded together at Cæsarea, the ninth of the calends of April.

At this time Diocletian and Maximian resigned the empire, after which followed several wars, which terminated in the settlement of the empire under Constantine; but, in the mean time, Maximin being advanced to the empire, and governing in the East, the persecution raged with more violence

lence than before ; and when the people were dispersed in crowds, and flying where they could for safety, Apphianus, who was not twenty years old, and of an opulent family of Berytus, distinguished himself in an eminent manner by his courage and constancy. On becoming a christian he had left his relations, who continued heathens, and came to Cæsarea, where he became intimately acquainted with Eusebius, and lived in the same house with him. This person, without communicating his design to any one, went of his own accord to Urbanus, and would have dissuaded him from sacrificing ; but being seized by the guards, and cruelly beaten, he was thrown into prison, and being there tortured, he was brought before the governor. There, refusing to sacrifice, his flesh was torn to the very bones and bowels, and moreover so bruised by being beaten with leaden balls, that they who were the best acquainted with him, could not know him. Not yielding at this torture, lint moistened with oil was put round his feet, and fire being set to it, the flesh was burned to the very bones. He was then remanded to prison, and three days after thrown into the sea. This was on the fourth of the nones of April\*.

About the same time a youth of the name of Ulpian, after being cruelly beaten, was put into a bag, together with a dog and a serpent, and then thrown

\* Euseb, Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 4. p. 413.

thrown into the sea. Ælefius, the brother of Apphianus, after enduring various tortures, was condemned to the mines of Palestine. But having by some means or other got his liberty, he went to Alexandria; and there seeing the governor insulting and abusing some christians in a shocking manner, he went to him, and behaving much in the same manner as his brother had done before him, he was exposed to various kinds of torture, and then thrown into the sea\*.

In the fourth year of the persecution, on the twelfth of the calends of December, it being the birth day of Maximin, splendid games were exhibited in his presence; and then Agapius, who was mentioned before, as having been sentenced together with Thecla to be thrown to the wild beasts, was brought before the emperor, along with a slave who was said to have murdered his master. This slave had his life granted him, and the clemency of the emperor was greatly extolled by the mob; but Agapius, refusing his liberty on the terms of renouncing his religion, was first of all thrown into the way of an enraged she bear, which he met of his own accord; and then after being torn by her, before he was quite dead, he was carried back to prison, and the day following he was thrown into the sea, with stones fastened to his legs†.

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 5, p. 416.

† Ibid. Cap. 6. p. 417.

In the fifth year of the persecution, on the fourth of the nones of April, being Sunday, Theodora, a young woman of Tyre, not eighteen years old, being at Cæsareà, went to some persons who were then acknowledging themselves to be christians in the presence of the governor, probably to ask their prayers after their martyrdom, which was no uncommon thing at that time. Being noticed, and presented to the governor, he first insulted her in the grossest manner, and then ordered her sides and breasts to be torn with iron hooks to the very bones; and while she yet breathed, preserving a serene and placid countenance, she was thrown into the sea. After this the governor, turning to the other confessors, ordered them to be sent to the mines of Phœnius in Palestine.

On the nones of November, Sylvanus, then a presbyter, and confessor, but afterwards a bishop, was condemned to the same mines, the joints of his feet being first disabled with hot irons. At the same time Dominus a person distinguished by many confessions, was sentenced to be burned alive. The same cruel governor ordered three to fight as gladiators, a venerable old man, Auxentius, to be thrown to the wild beasts, and some persons of middle age to be first castrated, and then sent to the mines.

Others, after enduring cruel tortures, the same governor threw into prison, and among these was the



the excellent Pamphilus, to whom Eusebius was so much attached. The governor having heard of his character, expected to see a specimen of his eloquence and philosophy; but on his refusing to sacrifice, he was so much enraged, that he ordered him to be subjected to the greatest torture; and not yielding to it, though his sides were torn with the iron hooks, he was thrown into prison together with the rest. Eusebius observes, that not long after, this very governor, who had been in the highest favour with Maximin, was publicly disgraced by him, and then condemned to lose his head\*.

In the sixth year of the persecution, ninety seven men, with women and children, were sent from Porphyrites in Egypt into Palestine, where Firmilian, the governor who had succeeded Urbanus, ordered the joints and sinews of their left feet to be destroyed by fire, their right eyes to be dug out, and the sockets to be burned with an hot iron. Then he sent them to the mines, together with those who had been condemned to serve as gladiators, but who had refused to learn their proper exercises. These had been brought before Maximin himself, and after having been tortured with hunger and scourging, had been condemned to this second punishment.

After

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 7, p. 418.

After these, others who had been apprehended at Gaza, in a meeting where the scriptures were read, were treated in the same manner, with those from Egypt, with respect to their feet and eyes, and some had their sides torn besides. Of these one woman, who reproached her judge for threatening her with violation, was first scourged; and when she was placed on the engine of torture, and they were tearing her sides with the hooks, another woman exclaimed against their proceedings, and asked how they could torture her sister in that manner. This so provoked the judge, that he ordered her to be seized, and on her refusing to sacrifice, she was instantly exposed to greater torture than any before her; and after that both the women were burned together. One of them was born in the neighbourhood of Gaza, and the other, who was called Valentina, was of Cæsarea.

Presently after followed the execution of Paulus, who being indulged with leave to pray before he was beheaded, prayed aloud, first for the peace of the whole christian church, and then for the conversion of the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles, that they might be brought to the knowledge of the true God. He prayed more especially for the company present, for the judge who had condemned him, for the emperors, and for his executioners, that what they were going to do might not be imputed to them. All were much affected by this

this prayer, but notwithstanding this, he was beheaded according to his sentence. This was on the eighth of the calends of August. Presently after one hundred and eighty more were brought from Egypt, and being first maimed, as the others from the same country had been before, in their left feet and right eyes, were sent by the orders of Maximin, some to the mines of Palestine, and others to those of Cilicia\*.

After this there was a little respite of the persecution, but it was soon renewed with as much violence as ever, fresh orders being given by Maximin to all the governors of provinces, and other officers, to restore the heathen temples, and to compel all persons, men, women, slaves, and children to sacrifice. Orders were also given that every thing that was sold in the market should be consecrated by libations, and that all who came to the public baths should be compelled by the guards to perform the customary rites. This appeared extravagant and unreasonable even to the heathens themselves, so that no person would accuse any of the christians. But they were forward, as usual, to declare themselves.

Three in particular went together to the president as he was sacrificing, entreating him to desist, and to worship the Creator of the world. On this, finding that they were christians, he ordered them

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 8. p. 420.

them to be executed, but without previous torture. This was on the thirteenth of the ides of November. At the same time a young woman of the name of Emmathas, being brought before the judge, was first dragged in a cruel manner through the city naked to the waist, and beaten with thongs, after which she was burned alive. This president Firmilian forbade the burial of the martyrs, and had them watched night and day for that purpose; so that the dogs being permitted to tear them, and drag them about, the whole city was full of bones and entrails, a horrid spectacle to every body.

The following month, on the fourteenth of the calends of January, some Egyptians, who had been sent to perform some kind offices to their countrymen, who had been mutilated, and sent to the mines of Cilicia, were seized at the gates of Cæsarea; and some of them were treated in the same manner as those whom they came to relieve, being lamed in one foot, and having their right eyes put out; but three of them, being sent to Ascalon, suffered in a different manner, two of them being beheaded and one burned alive. On the third of the ides of January, Petrus Apfelamus, being exhorted by his judges to consider his youth, but preserving his constancy, was burned in the same fire with Asclepius a Marcionite, whose zeal, says our author was not according to knowledge.

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ledge\*. But did not this man die for the very same truth for which the rest suffered, viz. as a christian; without any regard to his particular opinions with respect to christianity? Such is the lamentable prejudice of some christians, that they can allow no merit except to those of their own way of thinking.

Our author next proceeds to give a more particular account of the sufferings of his dear Pamphilus, a man distinguished by every virtue, his indifference to the world, his charity to the poor, his attachment to philosophy, and especially his study of the scriptures, to whose life Eusebius devoted three entire books. He then gives an account of his eleven companions in tribulation, among whom was Valens, an old man, a deacon of the church of Jerusalem, who greatly excelled in the knowledge of the scriptures, and Paulus, who had been tortured before. When these three had been confined two years, they were joined by five Egyptians, who had been sent to visit their brethren in Cilicia, and like the former had been apprehended at the gates of Cæsarea; and the next day, which was the fourteenth of the calends of March, they were brought before the judge, together with Pamphilus and his friends.

At first the judge attempted to shake the fortitude of these Egyptians, by various kinds of torture,

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 10. p. 426.

ture ; but this having no effect, they were sentenced to die. Then Pamphilus and his friends, being asked whether they would at length obey the emperor, and refusing to do it, were likewise ordered for execution. On this one Porphyrius, a young man of the family of Pamphilus, called out of the crowd, begging that he might be permitted to bury his master. But the judge, finding him to be a christian, ordered him to be tortured in the most excruciating manner ; and when he expressed no sense of pain, he ordered him to be thrown into a large pile of fire ; and thus he died before his master. The fate of this Porphyrius was told to Pamphilus by one Seleucus, a confessor, and who had been a soldier. This being observed, he also was carried to the president, and by him ordered to be executed.

After this Theodulus, a venerable old man, of the governor's own family, and who had been much esteemed by him on account of his faithful services, behaving as Seleucus had done, his master was more enraged at him than at any of the rest, so that he sentenced him to be crucified. The last of the twelve was Julianus, of Cappadocia, who hearing of the execution of these martyrs, ran to see it, and seeing their bodies on the ground, he, out of respect, kissed them. This being observed, he was brought to Firmilian, who ordered him to be  
burned

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burned alive, a sentence for which he gave God thanks. The bodies of all those twelve were watched four days and nights, that they might be devoured by wild beasts ; but as they lay all that time untouched, they were ordered to be buried. While the case of these twelve martyrs was much talked of, Adrian and Eubulus, of Manganæa, came to Cæsarea to see the other confessors ; but being there apprehended, they were first tortured, and then sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts. Two days after this, viz. the third of the nones of March, Adrian was exposed to a lion, and then run through with a sword ; and on the nones of March, Eubulus was treated in the same manner. This closes the account of those who suffered martyrdom in Cæsarea only. Some time after, this governor Firmilian was himself beheaded\*.

Here our author says he might relate the degradation of some bishops and clergy to the servile offices of taking care of the emperor's camels and horses, &c. and the torturing of others by the governors of provinces, to make them discover the treasures of their churches, and also some things of a different nature, and less honourable to christians, especially their shameful dissensions among themselves in the very time of the persecution, referring to the Meletians, and the Donatists, of whom

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whom

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 11, p. 427.

whom an account will be given hereafter ; but he apologizes for not entering into these particulars\*, and proceeds to give an account of the seventh year of the persecution, in which it was greatly relaxed through all Palestine, there being none to accuse the christians. A great multitude of the confessors having been condemned to the copper mines in that country, they had been indulged with great liberty, so that they formed themselves into regular churches. But the emperor, being informed of this by the governor of the province, gave orders that they should be divided into different companies ; and in consequence of this some were sent to Cyprus, others to mount Libanus, and the rest to different parts of the country, to be employed in different works. But four of the most distinguished among them were selected, and brought before the military commander of the place. Two of these, viz. Peleus and Nilus, had been bishops in Egypt, the third, supposed to be Helias, was a presbyter, and the fourth Paternus, a man eminent for his benevolence. All these, refusing to renounce their religion, were condemned to the flames.

Others, who, on account of their age or infirmity, were incapable of working, were sent to live in the country, at a distance from the rest. The chief of these was Sylvanus, bishop of Gaza, famous

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii. Cap. 12. p. 424



mous for his confessions from the beginning of the persecution to the end of it. There accompanied him several Egyptians, and among them one John, who had a most excellent memory, being able to repeat all the scriptures by heart ; so that when he was reciting *memoriter* in the public congregation, Eusebius, who was present, thought that he had been reading. Though he had been lamed and deprived of his eyes, he still enjoyed his memory. At length these mutilated and blind confessors, to the number of thirty eight, were by the order of Maximin beheaded in one day ; and this closed the persecution in Palestine, where it had raged eight years\*.

This persecution was most severely felt in the East, as Lybia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and thence to Illyricum. In the West the christians were more favourably treated. Constantius contented himself with demolishing their churches, and, in compliance with the disposition of his colleagues, he could not do less†. According to Eusebius, he did not even do this‡.

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\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 13, p. 435.

† De Mortibus Persecutorum, Cap. 15, p. 29.

‡ Hist Lib. viii, Cap. 13, p, 396.

## SECTION V.

*Of some Martyrdoms, the Accounts of which, though Ancient, are mixed with Fable, viz. that of Boniface; and those of Tarachus, Probus, and Andronicus.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the mixture of fable in the histories of the martyrdoms, which I shall relate in this section, yet as it can hardly be doubted but that they had a foundation in truth, I do not think it right wholly to omit them. But I shall not trouble the reader with all the fabulous circumstances with which they are mixed. Besides, it is no less instructive to us at this day to see the faults than the virtues of the primitive christians, and no fair writer has any motive to conceal them.

According to Eusebius, and the most authentic historians, christians soon laid an undue stress upon martyrdom, as if the mere suffering for christianity, independently of the temper of mind with which a man had lived, or with which he died, would certainly recommend him to God, and

and even give him a rank and influence in another world to which nothing else could raise men. Some of the martyrs themselves had the same ideas, and were led by them to a very improper conduct before their deaths, in their behaviour to the magistrates, and in the church, if they survived such sufferings as intitled them to the name of *martyrs*.

Christianity is no more answerable for this, than for any other abuse of its doctrines or institutions. It was proposed to persons in all states of mind, and was embraced by many whose discordant principles and maxims it could not always eradicate, and therefore was held together with them. Now, nothing had got faster hold on the minds of all men at the time of the promulgation of christianity, than the notion of the efficacy of certain *actions*, independently of any temper of mind with which they were performed, to recommend them to the favour, and to secure the protection, of the gods, those invisible powers by which the world is governed. With this view they had been used to do, and to suffer, the most extraordinary things, and had inflicted upon themselves, as well as upon others, the greatest cruelties. We see in the Faquirs of Indostan, and the tortures which the people of Mexico voluntarily endured, that this idea was not peculiar to the old world, but that it is produced by the same ignorance of the

the real causes of things, and of the nature of God, at all times.

Those, therefore, who make due allowance for the operation of foreign influence upon the human mind, will not be surprized, or offended, at a great mixture of similar superstitions among christians, who had been heathens. They ascribed to the water of baptism a virtue similar to that of the former rites of purification, to the Lord's supper, that of their mystical initiations, and to martyrdom that of those severities which the heathens had some times been used to exercise upon themselves.

Also, the natural effect of having entertained these ideas of the value of suffering, and the high rank it gave to the sufferers, would lead some of the martyrs to behave with that contempt of pain, and that insolence towards those who inflicted it, which is very unbecoming christians. There can be no true propriety of behaviour without just sentiments. In all other cases an abatement is to be made for the undue influence of superstition, or such motives as are foreign to true religion. On this account the heroism of Christ and that of the early martyrs, is as much superior to that of many in the later ages, as pure christianity is superior to that debased kind of it which possessed the minds of many of those who came after them.

Christ and the apostles had no superstition, that is, they did not connect the favour of God with  
any

any thing besides a good disposition of mind, and that upright conduct in life which springs from it; and therefore they considered martyrdom simply as an act of obedience to the will of God, which requires that, in all events, we adhere to truth and a good conscience, from the persuasion that, if we have not our recompence in this world, we shall certainly find it another. They did not teach men to rush upon persecution, but rather prudently, tho' with innocence, to avoid it; and Paul expressly says, that though he should give his body to be burned, it would avail him nothing without charity, or a principle of benevolence.

On the contrary, it cannot be denied that some of the martyrs exposed themselves to torture and death, from the idea that the mere suffering in that cause, would cancel all their crimes, and intitle them to the most distinguished place in heaven, for which it is possible that their real dispositions would very little contribute to qualify them. However, the fortitude with which they died in this cause adds to the evidence of christianity, as it is a proof of such a general persuasion concerning its truth, as could never have been produced, I do not say in the minds of those particular men, but in those of the great body of christians, without a real foundation in historical fact. These particular men might become christians, and enter the list of martyrs, without being able to give a rational account

account of their faith ; but if there never had been a well grounded faith in it originally, their insufficient faith, if it may be so called, could not have had any existence.

Nor are we to wonder at the mixture of fabulous circumstances in the accounts of some of the ancient martyrdoms, even though they were written near the time of the transactions. Many of the christians of that age, naturally enough, thought that these martyrs were as much the object of the divine attention, as they were of theirs ; and, consequently, every thing that appeared extraordinary relating to them, would be attributed to a divine interposition ; and being often repeated, would soon be so magnified, and altered, without any intention to misrepresent, or deceive, that an honest historian, a little tinctured with the same superstition, would unavoidably be what we should call credulous, and not be able to separate the fabulous circumstances from the real ones. And yet, notwithstanding this mixture of fable, there may be no great difficulty at this day, when our minds are free from the superstition which misled *them*, to separate the fabulous circumstances in the narrative from those that are authentic, and to perceive a clear foundation for credit in the principal articles, through all the heterogenous matter that has been transmitted along with them\*. It

\* I have two editions of the following histories, the one in Latin, annexed to the history of Perpetua and Fe-

It was in the reign of Diocletian, that Boniface of Rome (of whose martyrdom an account was first published from a Latin MS. in the Vatican library, and afterwards from the Greek) suffered at Tarsus. Leaving out some evidently fabulous circumstances, the story is as follows.

While one Simplicius was exercising great cruelties against the christians at Tarsus, in Cilicia, there was at Rome a woman of the name of Aglaes of a good family, and very rich. She had lived in criminal conversation with Boniface, who was her principal steward, a man addicted to all vices, except that he was very compassionate and generous; so that he would seek out objects of distress, that he might relieve them. After some time, Aglaes being touched with remorse, represented to Boniface the enormity of their conduct, particularly reminding him of a future judgment, and that then those persons would be reckoned the friends of Christ, who should minister to the wants of his suffering servants. She then directed him to go into the East, where the persecution was most vio-

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licitas, published by Valesius, in 1664; and the other in Greek, subjoined to Palladius's life of Chrysostom, by Bigottius, 1680, both printed at Paris. The last contains also the abridged accounts of them by Simeon Metaphrastes. I drew up the following account from the Latin, which came to my hands first, and afterwards corrected it by the Greek.

lent, and bring the relics of some of the martyrs ; that by building oratories to them, and shewing them due reverence, she might be benefited by their means ; making no distinction between services done to the living, and respect paid to the dead.

This office Boniface cheerfully undertook, saying to his mistress, if I find any relics, I will bring them ; but if my own body should come, receive it as such. She, thinking that he trifled, bid him leave off his drunkenness and folly, that he might be worthy to have the custody of the holy relics. He was, however, as serious as his mistress, and prepared himself for the journey by prayer and fasting.

When he was arrived at Tarsus, hearing that, at that very time, several were suffering martyrdom in the stadium, or public place, he bid the servants look out for an inn, and take care of their beasts, while he went where he wished to go. When he came to the stadium, where the christians were suffering, he saw some hanging with their heads downwards, and fire under them, some extended on four pieces of wood, by the separation of which by screws, their limbs were stretched ; some with their features defaced, some torn with hooks, some with their hands cut off, and others with their hands tied behind them, and cruelly scourged, in  
all



all twenty men, while the spectators were filled with the greatest horror.

Boniface, however, without being terrified from his purpose, went and kissed some of them who were under torture, requesting that they would pray for him, that he might be worthy to be their associate; and then sitting down by them, he exhorted them to take courage, by reminding them of their approaching happiness.

The judge, perceiving him, inquired who he was who was shewing that contempt of him and of the gods, and ordered him to be brought before him. Being asked who he was, he replied that he was a christian, and that by the help of God he should despise him and his tribunal. On his refusing to sacrifice, he was placed on the engine of torture, and his sides were torn till the bones appeared, while he shewed no sense of pain, and kept his eyes directed towards his fellow sufferers.

After he had borne this torture an hour, the judge asked him if he would sacrifice; and as he persisted in his refusal, he had reeds thrust under the nails of his hands, and melted lead was ordered to be poured down his throat. The spectators seeing this, cried out, "Great is the God of the christians, and of these holy martyrs;" and rushing with one accord, they overturned the altar, and threw stones at the judge, who was glad to make his escape.

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The next day he again ordered Boniface to be brought before him, and reproached him for his folly in putting his confidence in a man who had once been crucified. But he, returning his reproaches, though in a manner which did not become a christian, said that his master Jesus Christ had borne all these things before him, from a desire that all men might be saved. At this the judge was much enraged, and after enduring more torture, and an ineffectual attempt to stifle him in hot oil, Boniface was at length beheaded. This was on the ides of May.

In the mean time, the servants of Boniface were looking for him every where, expecting to find him in some tavern, or stew ; when they were informed that such a person as they described had suffered martyrdom the day before in the stadium. Finding it to be so, and paying five hundred solidi for the body, they wrapped it in spices, and conveyed it to Rome. Aglaes, being informed of this, met them five stadia from the city, on the Latin way, and there she built an oratory to receive the relics. After this she renounced the world, manumitted her slaves, and gave her wealth to the poor ; and after living thirteen years was buried with Boniface. —

In this narrative we see sufficient traces of superstition in the times in which the martyrdom happened, but more in the writer, who probably lived

lived in a later period, though the piece bears evident marks of considerable antiquity, on which account I thought I should not be justified in overlooking it.

Of similar character and authority with the preceding, is the account of the martyrdoms of Tarachus, Probus, and Andronicus, which was sent by the christians at Tarsus where they suffered, to their brethren at Iconium, with a request, that it might be transmitted to those in Pisidia and Pamphilia, and like the preceding, it was published first from an old Latin version, and then from the Greek. That there were such martyrs cannot well be doubted; and if the piece be not a forgery, it must have been written about the time of the event, which makes it more difficult to account for the fabulous circumstances that are in it.

It was in the consulship of Diocletian and Maximian the second time, on the twelfth of the calends of June, that the three persons above-mentioned were brought before Numerianus Maximus, president of Cilicia. The first of them had been a soldier, but had procured his discharge upon his conversion to christianity, which, with other cases of the same nature, shews that many christians in the early ages considered the profession of bearing arms as unbecoming a christian, and that on this account, though they might not think it absolutely unlawful, they declined it. Both he (Tarachus) and

and his two companions acknowledged themselves to be christians, and resisted all the endeavours of the governor, whether by intreaty or torture, to sacrifice to the heathen gods; but, upon the whole, I am hardly more pleased with their behaviour than with that of the judge. He was insolent and brutal, but he was not answered with the meekness that became a christian, but with a degree of contempt very unbecoming that character.

They had three hearings, the first at Tarsus, the second at Mopsuestia, and the third at Anazarbus; and after enduring the most dreadful tortures they were carried (for they were not then able to walk) to the amphitheatre, and thrown in the way of several wild beasts; and when these could not be made to hurt them, they were beheaded. Their bodies having been purposely mixed with many others, were diligently sought for by their brethren, and discovered, as they pretended, in answer to their prayers, by a bright star, which came from heaven, and rested upon each of them, and which afterwards conducted them to a place of safety. At length they were deposited in a mountain, where the three persons who wrote this account, viz. Marcion, Felix, and Verus, fixed their own habitation, determined to be buried along with them. The particulars of the examination

nation before the president, they say, they had from one of the guards named Sebastus, who was present.

As many christians at this period did behave as these martyrs are said to have done, it may not be amiss to relate the particulars of the behaviour of one of them. In some respects, it was, no doubt, proper, and worthy of commendation ; and when it was improper, it may not be the less instructive, as a feature of the times ; and though much of it may be supposed to be the language of the narrator, rather than that of the martyr, it will give us an idea of what was generally esteemed to be proper and heroic behaviour on such occasions. It is not my wish to magnify, or in any respect to disguise, the actions of christians, but to represent them as they really were. For this purpose I shall, without any other reason for a preference, give the examinations of Tarachus, who was presented first ; and for the sake of conciseness, I shall recite them in the form of a dialogue.

When the president had taken his place, Demetrius the centurion said, " There were presented to your highness at Pompeiopolis, by Eutolmius Palladius, one of your officers, some impious persons who do not obey the orders of the emperors, and they are now before your tribunal." Tarachus being then produced, the president said,

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*P.* What is thy name, for I interrogate thee the first, because thou art the eldest ?

*T.* I am a christian.

*P.* I did not as yet ask thee concerning that insipious appellation. Tell me thy name.

*T.* I am a christian.

*P.* Break his jaws, and bid him answer my question properly.

*T.* I do tell you my name, but if you ask what my parents called me, it is Tarachus, and when I was a soldier I was called Victor.

*P.* Of what country art thou, Tarachus ?

*T.* I am a Roman, but born at Claudiopolis in Syria, and because I was a christian I renounced the service.

*P.* Thou wert not worthy to serve, thou wicked wretch. But who gave thee thy discharge ?

*T.* I applied to Polybio my officer, and he granted it to me.

*P.* Then respect thy old age. I wish that thou mayest be one of those who comply with the wishes of the emperors, that I may distinguish thee by some honour. Wherefore come and sacrifice to our gods, which the emperors themselves worship.

*T.* But I say now, as I did before, that these gods were only men.

*P.* Sacrifice to the gods, and leave that subtlety.

*T.* I serve my God, and sacrifice not with blood

blood; but with a pure heart. For God does not want such sacrifices.

*P.* I have compassion on thy old age, and advise thee to lay aside all vanity, and sacrifice to our gods.

*T.* I do not forsake the law of God.

*P.* Wherefore, come, and sacrifice.

*T.* I cannot be guilty of impiety. I said, that I honour the law of God.

*P.* There is another law besides that, thou wretch.

*T.* You, who are impious, worship wood and stone, the work of men's hands.

*P.* Give him a blow, and tell him not to be foolish.

*T.* I do not relinquish that folly which gives me salvation.

*P.* I will make thee cease from that folly, and teach thee wisdom.

*T.* Do what you please, you have power over my body.

*P.* Strip him, and beat him with rods on the ground.

*T.* Now you have made me truly wise, strengthening me with blows. I wish to be strengthened more and more, in the name of God, and of his Christ.

*P.* Wicked and cursed wretch, dost thou con-

felts that thou Iervest two Gods, and yet deniest the gods ?

*T.* I confels him who is truly God.

*P.* Thou now confessedst God and Christ.

*T.* For he is the Son of God, the hope of christians, by suffering for whom we are saved!

*P.* Leave thy prating. Come and sacrifice.

*T.* I do not prate, but speak the truth. I have prayed in this manner sixty and five years, and do not depart from the truth.

Demetrius the centurion here said, O man spare thyself, and sacrifice to the gods. Be persuaded by me.

*T.* Stand off from me with thy advice, thou minister of Satan.

*P.* Let him be confined in prison, with heavy iron chains, and bring in another.

The second examination of Tarachus.

*P.* Call those impious wretches who obey a wicked law.

Demetrius the centurion. Here they are.

*P.* Old age is generally honourable, because it is attended with good sense. Wherefore, if thou hast reflected with thyself, Tarachus, thou wilt no longer abide by thy former resolution. Come then, and sacrifice to the gods for the honour of the emperors, that I may confer honour on thee.

*T.* I am a christian, and I wish that you and the emperors themselves would abandon that honour



nour for the true, that they might receive strength and life from the true God.

*P.* Strike him on the mouth with a stone, and bid him cease from his folly.

*T.* If I was a fool I should be like you.

*P.* Thy teeth are already beaten out; have pity on thyself, wretch.

*T.* You will never persuade me. You are not stronger than he who makes me strong.

*P.* Believe me. It will be better for thee to sacrifice.

*T.* If I thought it was better, I would not suffer this usage.

*P.* Stretch him on the rack, and beat him with fresh thongs. Tarachus making no answer, he said, Strike him on the mouth, and bid him answer me.

*T.* My jaws are broken, how can I answer?

*P.* And dost thou still refuse to comply? Go to the altar, and sacrifice to the gods.

*T.* If you make me incapable of speaking, I shall think the same.

*P.* I shall try thy obstinacy, thou accursed wretch.

*T.* Try what you please, I shall conquer by him who strengthens me, that is in the name of my God.

*P.* Bring fire, and burn his hands.

*T.* I do not fear thy temporal fire; but if I comply with thee, I should fear eternal fire.

*P.* See

*P.* See now, thy hands are burned off. Cease from thy vanity, thou madman, and sacrifice to the gods.

*T.* You speak as if I should comply with your proposal ; but I am able to bear whatever may be prepared for me.

*P.* Tie his feet, and then suspend him, and put fire under him.

*T.* I have despised thy fire, and do not fear thy smoke.

*P.* Now thou art suspended, consent and sacrifice.

*T.* Do thou sacrifice as thou art used to sacrifice, to men. It is not lawful for me to do it.

*P.* Bring strong vinegar and salt, and pour it into his nostrils.

*T.* Thy vinegar is pleasant to me, and thy salt has no pungency.

*P.* Mix mustard with the vinegar, and put it into his nose.

*T.* Thy servants have deceived thee. They have given me honey instead of vinegar.

*P.* Against the next examination, I will think of other tortures, and cure thy folly.

*T.* And you will find me prepared to bear them all.

*P.* Take him down, bind him in iron chains, and commit him to custody.

At the third examination, after more questions  
and

and answers, in which Tarachus, in reply to the threats of the president, challenges him to do his worst, in a manner more becoming a North-American Indian; than a christian, he was again suspended, his face bruised with stones, hot irons applied to his cheeks, his ears were cut off, his head shaved, and hot coals put upon it. After this the hot irons were put under his arm-pits, and during the whole, he spake as if he felt nothing; and the two others are both represented as behaving in a similar manner, under different modes of torture.

The truth of the narrative in general I do not question, as there are the most authentic accounts of some christians behaving in this manner, though this is probably exaggerated; but I cannot recite the particulars, as Fleury and others do, with approbation. Our Saviour left no such example as this. His sensibility was as great as his fortitude, and nothing dropped from him that favoured of boasting, or of insolence.

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## SECTION VI.

*A general View of the Civil Revolutions in the Empire, previous to the Settlement of it under Constantine.*

**N**OT chusing to interrupt the account of the persecution with more than was absolutely necessary of the *civil history* of the times, I shall give a summary view of the whole in this place; and this is the more necessary, as in the contest for power among so many competitors for the empire as arose presently after the persecution began, the revolutions, which had a great influence with respect to it, were so great and rapid, that it is not easy to retain them in memory.

In the second year of the persecution, Diocletian was seized with a disorder which affected his intellects, and, this together with the management of Galerius, induced him to abdicate the empire\*; and he prevailed upon his colleague Maximian Herculus to do the same. This was on the calends of April, A. D. 304. Diocletian retired to Salona

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. viii, Cap. 13, p. 396: De Mortibus Persecutorum, Cap. 9, p. 17:

Salona in Dalmatia, and Maximian to Lucania in Italy.

In consequence of these resignations, the two Cæsars, Constantius (who had divorced Helena, by whom he had Constantine, and had married the daughter-in-law of Maximian) and Maximian Galerius (who had also divorced his wife, in order to marry the daughter of Diocletian) were proclaimed emperors; and of these the former, who discontinued the persecution, governed in the West, and the latter, who kept it up with great rigour, ruled in the East, A. D. 306, Galerius appointed two Cæsars, Severus and Maximin, his sister's sons, giving Italy to Severus, and the East to Maximin.\* All this time he detained Constantine, unwilling that he should be Cæsar. But the young man making his escape to his father, who was then at York in Britain, he was by the army saluted by the appellation of emperor.

On this Maxentius, the son of Maximian Herculus, caused himself to be elected emperor at Rome, rejecting some proposals which had been made to him for an accommodation by Constantine. Galerius hearing of this difference, sent Severus with an army to Rome; but Maxentius, by corrupting his troops, defeated him, and besieged him in Ravenna. In the midst of these disturbances, Maximian Herculus went to Rome; and having procured himself to be proclaimed emperor a  
second

second time, joined his son before Ravenna ; and not being able to force the place, he deceived Severus by a treaty, and got him assassinated. After this Galerius marched to Rome, and finding his forces not sufficient for the enterprize, he appointed Licinius, an old friend of his, to be Cæsar, A. D. 307.

In the mean time old Maximian, after making a vain attempt to supplant his son, resigned the empire once more, but with a view to persuade Diocletian to join him in resuming it. Not succeeding in this, he went into Gaul, and joined Constantine, giving him his daughter Fausta in marriage. But afterwards, endeavouring to supplant his son-in-law, as he had before done his own son, he was besieged in Marseilles, and being taken was put to death.

A. D. 310, Galerius who had before made Licinius Cæsar, gave him the title of *Augustus* and *emperor* ; and on this Maximin took the same title, without consulting Galerius. Though Maxentius and Galerius were men of similar dispositions, both naturally cruel, and both of them persecutors of the christians, they hated one another, and the empire was dreadfully ravaged by the civil wars between them ; and the consequence of this was a severe famine at Rome.

A. D. 311, Galerius was seized with that dreadful disorder of which mention was made before, publishing

and which induced him to join Constantine in publishing an edict in favour of the christians not long before his death. On this event it was agreed that Constantine should have Britain, Gaul, Spain and Germany; Maxentius, Italy, Sicily, and Africa; Licinius, Illyricum, Dacia, and Greece; and Maximin all the East, and Egypt. After this partition of the empire, the persecution of the christians ceased for a short time, but it was renewed by Licinius and Maximin, in the countries which were under their dominion.

Maxentius rendering himself insupportable to the people at Rome, Constantine was invited to come to their assistance; and having in the mean time declared himself a christian, he defeated Maxentius and his lieutenants in several battles, in the last of which Maxentius flying over a bridge which he laid over the Tiber, it broke down under him and the crowd of his attendants, and he was drowned. After this victory Constantine published edicts in favour of the christians, restoring to them their churches and goods, and excusing their ministers from all civil functions. This was A. D. 312.

Still Maximin and Licinius continued the persecution. But A. D. 313, Licinius married the sister of Constantine, and put a stop to it. Presently after this Diocletian, who had been invited to attend the marriage, died; having seen christi-

anity in a more flourishing state after the persecution than it had ever enjoyed before. Maximin, to whom the edict of Constantine and Licinius in favour of the christians had been sent, did not chuse to refuse giving his sanction to it altogether; but having been deceived by his priests, who promised him a successful war against Licinius, and being worsted in it, he first put them to death, and then published an edict in favour of the christians, restoring to them all that had been taken from them during the persecution.

The year following, A. D. 314, Maximin was seized with a disorder which occasioned the loss of his sight, and reduced him to a skeleton; and of this, after languishing a long time, full of remorse, it is said, for his cruelty to the christians, he died. After the death of Maximin, A. D. 315, Licinius declared war against Constantine, and not succeeding they were reconciled again. The year following Licinius revived the persecution against the christians; and quarrelling again with Constantine he was defeated in several battles, and in A. D. 324 was reduced to surrender at discretion. Out of regard to his sister, Constantine granted him his life, and fixed Theffalonica for the place of his abode; but Licinius having recourse to arms once more, A. D. 325, he was presently defeated, and put to death. From this time the whole Roman empire was united under one head, and that a christian.

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SECTION VII.

*General Observations on this great Persecution, and the Effects of it.*

WE cannot wonder that, after so long and dreadful a persecution, in which such numbers of christians suffered death in extreme torture many more were maimed for life, more reduced to great poverty and distress, and many dispersed in distant countries, there should be great joy over all the christian world. The terminations of former persecutions had little in them that resembled this. Till this time christians had never enjoyed more than a short respite from trouble ; the emperors who had been most friendly to them, having been heathens, had only connived at them. From the time of Nero there had always been some laws in force against them ; and in the most favourable times, they had been at the mercy of the populace, whose clamours the most resolute governors of provinces, and sometimes even the emperors themselves, had not been able to withstand. Whereas now, they not only found all the laws by which they had been oppressed repealed, but new laws made expressly in their favour, laws by which their religion

ligion was both protected and encouraged, by an emperor who was a christian as well as themselves; and what was more than all this, their numbers and their respectability, were so much increased, that there was no danger of any emperor finding it necessary to sacrifice them to the security of his power. Their enemies, destitute of the aid of the civil magistrate, and in some measure even of that of the populace, could only hate and envy them, without being able to give them any material disturbance.

Constantine had fought and conquered as a christian, and consequently those who fought under him must either have been christians, or at least have had no objection to serve him as such so that he had nothing to fear from any heathen competitor, which would certainly have been the case if any emperor in an earlier period had declared himself a christian. This remarkable fact, viz. that of Constantine establishing himself in the empire, and reigning so long as he did, undisturbed by any heathen competitor, is an unanswerable proof of the great progress that christianity had made in the Roman empire; a progress made by its own evidence only, and in the face of every difficulty that could possibly be thrown in its way, in the course of near three hundred years before his accession. If the majority of the subjects of the empire were not professed christians at the accession of Constantine, they had at least been brought  
to

to think so well of christianity, that they had no objection to its being the prevailing religion, and to its being countenanced by the emperor in preference to heathenism.

The issue of the war with Licinius, which was renewed at several periods, and before the termination of which the heathen subjects of the empire had time enough to recollect themselves, and to recover from any sudden consternation into which they might have been thrown by the rapid successes of Constantine, was the last and most decisive proof of the great superiority of the christians, or of those who were disposed to favour christianity, over the bigoted heathens. Had the christianity of Constantine given great and general offence, the several revolts of Licinius gave it the most favourable opportunity of shewing itself; so that the issue of this war clearly proves, that those who wished well to the ancient superstitions, and were zealous for the continuance of them, were comparatively few, and that the Roman world in general thought itself happy in a christian emperor.

I would farther observe, that this state of things affords a strong presumptive proof of the truth of christianity. The heathen religion had every advantage of antiquity, learning, and power; and yet could not prevail against the new religion, with the heavy disadvantage of having a crucified

cified Jew for its founder. Christianity had no advantage from power, till by its own evidence only, and in opposition to every kind of power, it had prevailed so much, as to make it the interest of the ruling powers to espouse it.

With respect to the conduct of divine providence, I would observe that the sufferings of christians, as well as those of Christ himself, though so great, and of such long continuance, were necessary to the firm establishment of christianity; and that this was necessary to the happiness of mankind in future ages. For to the confirmation of their faith it was absolutely necessary, that no person, to the end of time, should ever be able to say, that christianity had established itself in the world by means of power, of policy, or of learning; and that its evidences had not been rigorously examined at a time when every means of examination were existing, and also when both its friends and enemies were sufficiently interested in the examination.

Now the persecution of christians, from the very origin of their religion at Jerusalem, in the very midst of its most inveterate enemies, and for more than two centuries after this, through the whole extent of the Roman empire (the power of which over all its subjects was, by its constitution, perhaps greater than any that had ever existed in the world before, or that has existed even since)

a period

a period also that was far from being unfavourable to learning and inquiry, not preventing, but evidently promoting, the spread of christianity, is the most incontestable proof, that neither *arguments*, nor *force*, though both were exerted to the utmost, could prevail against it. On the other hand, the christians who had no alternative but abandoning their religion or their lives, would not certainly chuse the latter without what appeared to them to be sufficient reason, and such as they had not taken up lightly, and without the most careful examination. Because we do not see that, in any other cases, men deliberately throw away their lives; and especially that they submit to long continued torture, without cause.

This was the state of things between the friends and the enemies of christianity, while the facts were recent, capable of the most easy investigation, and the witnesses were numerous. And that they who did enquire with a proper temper of mind were really satisfied with respect to these facts, is evident from their continuing to profess themselves christians notwithstanding all the discouragements they lay under, and by their daily making converts of others. It is of the greatest importance to observe, that the things to be examined were plain *facts*, with respect to which one man's understanding is just as good as that of any other. Whatever learning or genius could do,  
was

was at first intirely against christianity, because its origin was wholly with the illiterate; but at length the learned themselves, of every class, attached as they were to their respective favourite systems, were induced to abandon them, in favour of a religion which, both on account of its tenets, and of its founder and preachers, they had at first held in the greatest contempt.

A man who can say that, in these circumstances, christianity made its way in the world, as it is known to have done before the reign of Constantine, without its being founded on truth, must say that human nature was not the same thing then that it is now. And the man who can seriously assert this, will not be much attended to by other men. He must, in fact, believe infinitely more miracles, and of a more stupendous nature, than the christian admits, and these both without evidence, and without an object. He must be a believer in the absolute and proper insatiation of the greater part of the subjects of the Roman empire for the three first centuries. Nothing less than this will account for unquestionable facts upon this hypothesis.

I must observe again, and enlarge a little upon the observation, that the things to be examined into by the friends or the enemies of christianity, were not truths of an abstract or metaphysical nature, with respect to which any man, or any number of men, may form wrong judgments, and become

come tenaciously attached to them, but simply the truth of *facts*, which it requires nothing more than common sense to judge of, and likewise such an application of common sense or understanding, as all men are continually exercising, and therefore with respect to which they are the least liable to make a mistake, and form a wrong judgment.

What they had to inquire into was simply this, whether Christ, with whom many of them were personally acquainted, wrought real miracles, whether he rose from the dead, and whether the apostles and others, continued to work miracles in support of his divine mission afterwards. With the truth or untruth of these facts, the apostles themselves, and all their cotemporaries, must either have been acquainted, or might easily have satisfied themselves. They could not therefore have been imposed upon themselves with respect to the facts, nor can it be imagined that the thousands of that generation who suffered, and many of whom died, in the cause of christianity could have any motive to impose upon others. We do not indeed think it necessary to trouble ourselves to investigate the causes of the sentiments and conduct of single persons, or of a few persons; because their faculties may be deranged, or they may have been subjected to such particular influences as cannot possibly be known, except perhaps to those who have attended them from their infancy, and have

been acquainted with their whole history. But this can never be said of so many persons, of all descriptions, as are well known to have embraced christianity in the very age of the apostles, except by persons whose own minds are deranged, and therefore whose objections it is to no purpose to consider, or reply to.

But supposing the thousands and tens of thousands who embraced christianity in the age of the apostles, to have been properly infatuated, so as to believe that they actually saw and heard things that had no existence, the next generation had sufficient leisure, and sufficient opportunity, to inquire into the facts, and this most extraordinary one, of the infatuation of their predecessors, among the rest; and they were sufficiently interested so to do, when, if they embraced christianity, they had nothing before them but the fate of preceding christians. Yet we see the inquiries that were made in the second generation, and all the succeeding ones after the apostles, continually added to the number of christians, who kept uniformly increasing, among the learned and unlearned, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, till, notwithstanding all their hardships, they, or their friends, became the more powerful part of the Roman empire.

To suppose that christianity could have propagated itself in this manner without its being founded



founded in truth, is to suppose, as I observed before (and because it cannot be too much attended to, I mention it again) more miracles, and those of a more extraordinary nature, than are believed by christians; miracles of which no evidence can be given, and for which no reason can be assigned. For it must be supposed that all these innumerable converts to christianity in the early ages imagined that they had heard and seen what they never had heard or seen, or that they had inquired into the truth of recent facts, when they had made no inquiry at all, and that they sacrificed their ease, their liberty, their property, and many of them their lives, for a mere fancy, an illusion of the brain. Their minds must therefore have been under a proper and miraculous infatuation, and for no purpose but to subject them to the most grievous sufferings, and to delude mankind in all future ages.

Now, between this strange and incredible supposition, and the truth of the gospel history, there is no medium. Admitting the facts which are related by the evangelists, and the author of the Acts of the Apostles, every thing that has followed to the present times is easy and natural. The conversion of the first christians, obstinate and reluctant as they many of them were, the conversion of others by them, and all the subsequent events, have an adequate cause, so that without  
supposing

supposing any farther miracles, all things have come by a regular progress, each step of which is perfectly intelligible, to the state in which we see them to be at present. But on no other hypothesis can *present appearances*, what we ourselves now see, be accounted for. On the other supposition (which, if they reflect at all, must be that of all unbelievers) we see the most wonderful change in the history of the world, a revolution in the minds of men, of all nations, and all descriptions, produced by supernatural delusion ; that is, a great effect without any cause, that a man in his sober senses would think of alleging for it.

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## SECTION VIII.

*Of the Meletians and the Donatists.*

**W**ITHIN the period of which I am now treating, arose the different sects of the Melitians, Donatists, and Manichæans ; the first of small consequence, but the two others very considerable, both for extent and duration, and especially the last of them.

Meletius was a bishop of Lycopolis in Egypt, who was said to have been deposed for various causes, but especially for having denied the faith, and sacrificing, in time of persecution, by a council, in  
which

which Peter, bishop of Alexandria, presided\*. Meletius, however, thought that he had reason to complain of the proceedings against him ; and having many friends, he continued to act as bishop in defiance of the council. He even said that he had been deposed, not for apostacy, but merely on account of a difference of opinion between himself and Peter, on the subject of receiving apostates, and thought that Peter was too easy in this respect. As there can be no doubt of his having alleged this in his own defence, it is in the highest degree improbable that he himself should ever have been an apostate; and it must be observed, that we have no account of the Meletians, but what we can collect from the writings of their bitter adversaries. This schism commenced A. D. 301. Afterwards Meletius, continuing in opposition to the bishops of Alexandria, took the part of Arius ; and notwithstanding the interposition of the council of Nice, the sect of the Meletians continued till the fifth century, and they were Arians to the last.

The origin of the *Donatists* was very similar to that of the Meletians, but the schism they made in the church was much more extensive, affecting the greatest part of Africa ; whereas that of the Meletians extended no farther than Egypt. Upon the death of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, probably A. D. 306, the neighbouring bishops, with-

out

\* Sacrates, Lib. 1. Cap. vii. p. 15.

out calling in those of Numidia, who had been used to assist on those occasions, chose Cæcilianus, a deacon of the church, and he was ordained by Felix, bishop of Aptungus. But two of the presbyters of the same church, Botrus and Celestus, are said to have been displeased at this preference given to themselves, who were of a superior order ; and the new bishop having given offence to a woman of fortune, named Lucilla, by reproving her for her superstition, in kissing the bones of some supposed martyrs before she received the communion, she joined them in forming a party against him ; and a synod being called, at which the Numidian bishops were present, Cæcilianus was deposed, and Majorinus, a reader in the church, and a domestic of Lucilla, was ordained bishop in his place. It was alleged against Cæcilianus that he had not given the assistance which he ought to have done to those who had suffered in the late persecution, and that Felix, who had ordained him, was a *traditor*, or one who had given up the sacred books when they were demanded in order to be burned, which was deemed to be a heinous offence, of the same nature with apostacy itself.

The party of Majorinus was also joined by some persons who had the custody of the sacred vessels of the church, which had been concealed in the time of persecution. And the report, true or false,

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false, that Cæcilianus was a favourer of the traditors, induced many to join the opposite party, and among these were almost all the bishops of Mauritania. Majorinus soon dying, and being succeeded by Donatus, a man of learning and eloquence, and esteemed a saint by his followers, his name was given to the whole sect, as was that of Socius to unitarians of later ages. This account of the origin of the name is much more probable than that of its being derived from another Donatus, a bishop of Numidia, but no ways eminent, who, along with others, took the part of Majorinus.

The Donatists thought it was a sufficient reason for their separation, that Cæcilianus had not been regularly ordained; saying, that the part which the traditors had in his ordination vitiated that proceeding, and all that followed upon it. They agreed with the Novatians, in pretending to great purity, but on a very different principle; the purity of the Novatians consisting in their churches being free from impure members, but that of the Donatists in their not partaking of the impurity which was supposed to have been derived from the ordination of an impure person, which, in their idea, affected all the churches which held communion with them. Consequently, they considered all their administrations as invalid, so that baptism administered by them was, in reality, no baptism at all. The Donatists by no means  
acted

acted upon the great principle of the Novatians, in refusing to admit penitents, nor did they condemn second marriages.

The Donatists are sometimes charged with being unitarians ; but it does not appear that they were any more so than the Montanists, who are likewise charged with it. The original difference between them and the Catholics had nothing to do with any particular opinion concerning the person of Christ ; but many of the Donatists, perhaps Donatus himself, as well as many of the Montanists, were, no doubt, unitarians ; and this doctrine being deemed heretical, it was sometimes ascribed to the whole body by way of reproach.

From the acknowledgment of Austin, the great opposer of the Donatists, it is evident that they were not, in general, deficient in any article of what was deemed to be orthodox faith. " Every thing," he says, " may be had without the church, except " salvation. They may have the sacraments, " and the gospel. They may have faith, and " preach in the name of the Father, the Son, " and the Holy Spirit; but they cannot have salvation, except in the catholic church\*." Whoever," he says, " is separated from the catholic church, " though he may think he lives well (*laudabiliter*) " yet for this crime only, that he is separated from " the unity of Christ, he cannot have life, but the  
wrath

\* Super Gestis cum Emerito, Opera, Vol. vii, p. 631.

"wrath of God abideth on himſ." It is barely credible, that ſo great a man, as Auſtin in many reſpects was, ſhould avow a ſentiment ſo uncharitable, and ſo miſerably miſinterpret the ſcriptures to ſupport it. But it is the duty of an hiſtorian to exhibit every thing that is inſtructive; vices as well as virtues, the weakneſs as well as the ſtrength of the human underſtanding.

The Donatiſts were a ſeparate body of chriſtians for three centuries, and in almoſt every city in Africa there was one biſhop of this ſect, and another of the catholics. All this would have had no ſerious conſequence, if the jurifdiction of one biſhop, or a ſet of biſhops, founded upon the idea of the importance of *the unity of the church*, had not been in a great meaſure, eſtabliſhed at this time. But in this age a biſhop, who had not been ordained by the neighbouring biſhops, and according to the uſual forms, was deemed to be a ſchiſmatic; and, as if he had been a heretic, he was excommunicated by thoſe who diſapproved of his election. And thoſe who took upon them to promote this ſuppoſed neceſſary *unity of the church*, left no means untried, even that of force, where it could be applied, to heal what they took to be a breach in it.

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\* Epiſt. 152. Opera, Vol. ii, p. 696.

Unfortunately, there is not extant any writing of the Donatists, and we must never expect an impartial account of any sect of men from their professed enemies. We have, however, an account of a public conference between the Donatists and the catholics, in the reigns of Honorius and Theodosius, of which an account will be given in its proper place. Against the Donatists we have several tracts of Austin, and a large treatise in seven books, addressed to Parmenianus, by Optatus, bishop of Milevi.

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## SECTION IX.

### *Of the Manichæans.*

THE sect of the Manichæans was of a much more serious nature, and had more lasting consequences, than that of the Donatists. The founder of it was one *Mani*, as he is called in the East, *Manes* by the Greek writers, and commonly *Manichæus* by the Latins. The account that Eusebius



sebius gives of this person\*, is so manifestly a mere invective, and so full of absurdity, that I shall only insert it, in Dr. Lardner's translation in the notes †. It may serve, however, as a specimen of the manner in which this writer and others, commonly treated those persons whom they considered as heretics, and may shew us how little we can depend upon their accounts, when there are no facts or circumstances, by the help of which we may be able to correct them. The larger account of Socrates‡, besides being equally an invective,

\* Euseb. Hist. Lib. vii, Cap. 31, p. 365.

† “ About the same time that madman, fitly named  
 “ Manes, formed the wild heresy called after his name,  
 “ being set up for the ruin of many by Satan, the ad-  
 “ versary of God. This person was a barbarian in ev-  
 “ ery respect, both in his speech and in his manners.  
 “ As for his disposition, it was diabolical and furious,  
 “ for he made an appearance of being Christ himself.  
 “ Sometimes he gave out that he was the comforter,  
 “ and the Holy Ghost. To madness he added  
 “ excessive pride, and as if he had been Christ, he chose  
 “ twelve to be companions with him in his innovation.  
 “ His scheme was patched up of many false and im-  
 “ pious heresies long since extinct. This venomous  
 “ principle was brought into our world, the Roman  
 “ empire, from Persia. From that time the impious  
 “ doctrine of the Manichæans has infected many.  
 “ Such was the rise of that science falsely so called.”  
 Credibility, Vol. vi. p. 17. Works, Vol. iii. p. 375.

‡ Lib. i. Cap. 2, 2 p. 54.

tive, has so much the air of fable, that I shall neglect it altogether, and content myself with giving a summary of the more temperate and probable accounts of this extraordinary man by Beausobre and Lardner, without entering into the discussion of any particulars.

According to these writers, Mani was a person born in the dominions of the king of Persia, rich, learned, educated among philosophers, and one who attended the Persian court at an early age. He became a convert to christianity, and openly professed and taught it. At what time he appeared as a public teacher in his native country is uncertain, but his doctrines spread into the Roman empire about the end of the third, or the beginning of the fourth century. His principles were contained in books written by himself, but generally ascribed to Buddas, Addas, or Adimantus. One of them was intitled *Mysteries*, another *Chapters*, or *Heads*, and another *the Gospel*. He also wrote many epistles; and after spending his whole life in teaching what he thought to be genuine christianity, it is probable that he died a martyr to his profession.

The doctrine of Mani was, in many respects, the same with that of the Gnostics who preceded him; only, instead of supposing evil to have arisen ultimately from subordinate and inferior beings, the offspring of the Supreme Being, he held  
the

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the doctrine of two original independent principles, the one immaterial and supremely good, the other material, and the source of all evil; but actuated by a soul, or something of the nature of intelligence, the origin of which he does not appear to have clearly explained. The former of these principles he usually termed light, the latter darkness.

This world, which contains a mixture of good and evil, Mani supposed to have had its origin from an attempt that was made upon the kingdom of light by the kingdom darkness. The Supreme Being, seeing this invasion, detached from himself a power which formed man, investing him with the five elements. But the prince of darkness overpowered him, and seized upon the soul, or portion of light, that was in him. On this event the Supreme Being sent a living spirit, which rescued a portion of this light, and out of it formed the sun, moon, and stars, and then the earth from matter. In other words, says Beaufobre, the soul is a celestial substance, which God thought fit to mix with matter for the making of the world, and this was occasioned by some enterprize of the material principle, which God foresaw, but did not think proper to prevent; and he created the sun, moon, and stars, out of those portions of light, which, tho' they had been mixed with the darkness, had preserved their original purity.

Mani

Mani ascribed the formation of the body of man to the devil, and supposed that as, in the general system itself, there were two principles, there were in man two souls, the one the source of good purposes, and the other of evil ones. Adam, the Manichæans said, had much light and little darkness, and therefore he lived holily a considerable time; but the adverse part prevailing, he had commerce with his wife, and so fell.

Man having fallen, they said that God sent a Saviour like himself, or of the same substance with himself, and therefore properly called *God*, and that he was man only in appearance; that he had no birth at all, not even a miraculous one, nor any baptism, and only seemed to die. Such was their opinion of Christ. They also believed that the Holy Spirit was another emanation from the Supreme Being, but inferior to him.

The office of Christ, the Manichæans said, was to conduct souls back again to the kingdom of God, or of light, from which they originally came; but that since his ascension, he dwells in the sun by his power, and in the moon by his wisdom, as the Holy Spirit resides upon earth. They therefore, when they prayed, bowed towards the sun in the day time, and towards the moon in the night. They believed in a future judgment, but probably not in the eternity of hell torments; and, indeed, believing the doctrine of transmigration, and allowing

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lowing to each soul five bodies, and consequently as many different states of trial, they could not well suppose that many would be finally lost, though they supposed that God had prepared an eternal prison for the mansions of pure darkness.

The public worship of the Manichæans was very simple. They read the scriptures, they baptized, even infants, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and partook of the Lord's supper. They observed the Lord's day, but fasted upon it. They likewise celebrated Easter, and had a regular church discipline and censures. They rejected the books of the Old Testament, but not those of the New, excepting some parts, as those which relate to Christ's birth, circumcision, baptism, &c. and they paid great respect to certain apocryphal books, ascribed to Peter and Andrew, Thomas and John, or the travels of the apostles, the gospel of Thomas, and the acts of Paul and Thecla, probably written by one Leucian, who, though not properly a Manichæan, was one who entertained similar principles, and lived about A. D. 140.

The sect of Manichæans was divided into *the elect*, and *the auditors*, of whom the latter might eat flesh, drink wine, bathe, marry, traffic, possess estates, bear magistracies, &c. all which were forbidden to the elect. But these were maintained by the auditors, who revered them so much, that they  
always

always kneeled down to ask their blessing. However, many of the auditors endeavoured to imitate the elect, and their austere manners gained them many admirers, so that there were Manichæans in many parts of the world, though there were not many of them in any one place. Austin was an auditor among the Manichæans nine years, and he promoted their cause very much among men of letters, and persons of considerable rank in life.

Besides the books ascribed to Addas, Buddas, or Adimantus, but which were probably written by Mani himself, and which were held in the highest esteem among them, mention is made of another Manichæan writer, called Agapius; and it is probable that we have almost the entire treatise of Faustus, another of them, in Austin's answer to it. Of the writers against the Manichæans, Fabricius enumerates forty, and his catalogue is by no means complete. Among them Epiphanius enumerates Eusebius of Cæsarea, Eusebius of Emesa, Serapion of Thmuis, Athanasius of Alexandria, George of Laodicea, Appollinaris of the same place, and Titus of Bostra.

It may be said with respect to the Manichæans, as I observed of the Gnostics, that the historical evidence of christianity must have been very clear and strong, to induce those who held such philosophical principles as theirs to embrace it\*.

S. E. C.

\* Lardner's Credibility, Vol. vi. p. 17, &c. Beausobre's Histoire de Manichéisme.

SECTION X.

*Of the Constitution of the Christian Church before  
the Time of Constantine.*

AS there was no material alteration, that we can distinctly trace, in the constitution of the christian church, from the period in which I last mentioned the subject, till the time of Constantine, I shall in this place give a general view of it, in all the intermediate periods, as far as will be necessary to my purpose, which is not to be particular or critical; and in this I shall make great use of Lord Chancellor King's treatise on this subject.

Originally there were several bishops, or presbyters (for it is evident that they meant the same thing) in most christian churches; but in the period of which I am now treating there was only one person who had the title of *bishop* in a church, though the whole jurisdiction of that bishop was called *one church, or parish*, and never *diocese*, comprehending several churches. Let a city have been ever so large, and have contained ever so many christians, we never read of more than one bishop in the place. This arose from the natural custom of directing particular presbyters to preside in those assemblies, which, on account of th

increasing number of converts, were obliged to be held separately from the original place of meeting, but which were still considered as so many branches of the original church. It is probable also that villages very near a large town would often be served in the same manner, viz. by the presbyters sent from the town, and not have bishops of their own, though others at a greater distance would of course have them. These were called *choroepiscopi*.

When the christians either in a remote part of a town, or a neighbouring village, were very few, it would be a convenience to them to have their affairs managed in this manner; and if, as their numbers gradually increased, no sensible inconvenience arose from it, this custom of particular congregations being governed by presbyters would naturally be continued, till at length the bishop of the original congregation in any place, would insensibly become a Diocesan bishop, having several distinct congregations under his care. This was the case with the Goths, who in all this period, and long afterwards, had no more than one bishop. Still, however, the members of these several congregations united under one head might assemble, either in person, or by their deputies, for the choice of a bishop, or any other business which concerned them all.

The lord chancellor King, supposes that, excepting



cepting the city of Alexandria, no bishop had the care of more than a single congregation, or as many people as could meet in one place, till near the time of Constantine. But this is in the highest degree improbable, and utterly inconsistent with what is well known to have been the number of christians in many cities within that period. His chief argument is that the members of each church are often said to meet *in one place*. But this might as well apply to the church of Jerusalem. For we read that when Paul was at Jerusalem, A. D. 58, *the whole multitude must needs come together\**; though it is certain that there were not less than ten thousand christians at Jerusalem in the very year of our Saviour's ascension; and it cannot but be supposed that they must have more than doubled or tripled their numbers between that time and this.

These bishops, as well as the presbyters, and the other officers of the church, were chosen and appointed by the whole body of christians in the place; and at first no other *ordination* would be thought necessary. But by degrees it was thought proper, for the sake of preserving harmony, and keeping up the favourite idea of the *unity of the church*, that some of the neighbouring bishops should concur in the ordination of those who were to be considered as their colleagues. Consequently their concurrence in the choice of a bishop be-

came

\* Acts xxii. 21.

came necessary ; and at length it was settled that three of the neighbouring bishops at least should assist at the ordination, and that one of them should lay his hands upon him and pray, recommending him and his labours to the divine blessing ; a ceremony which was afterwards called *consecration*. But even in this the presbyters of the church joined the bishop, doing what themselves had been used to perform before it was thought necessary to ask the concurrence of others. After the consecration it was usual to give notice of it to the bishops of other sees.

Still, however, the original idea, of a bishop being the same with a presbyter, prevailed so far, that when he was appointed, he was not supposed to have any new powers. He presided, indeed, in the council of the presbyters, and would, no doubt, have much personal influence, but he had only a single vote in their decisions. In the time of Firmilian and Tertullian, presbyters had the power of baptizing, confirming and ordaining, but this was with the permission of the bishop. The presbyters as well as the bishops were required to be exempt from all secular employments ; and consequently if they had not wherewith to maintain themselves, they must have been maintained out of the funds of the society.

The office of deacon continued as before ; but they ranked with the *clergy*, when these came to be

be considered as a distinct body from the *laity*. In large churches there were also many inferior officers, as those of sub-deacons, readers, acolyths, and exorcists. The title of sub-deacon and acolyth are similar ; but the latter are by some thought to have had the care of the lamps, and of providing bread and wine for the eucharist. The exorcists had the care of insane persons, and were, no doubt, taught to pronounce over them the usual words of adjuration, in the name of Christ, &c. for it was the general opinion in this age, as well as in that of our Saviour, that insane persons were possessed with evil spirits ; and though they were no longer cured in a miraculous manner, yet the same forms might be continued with the idea of their having some invisible good effect.

The ordinary christians were not admitted to baptism till they had been some time in the class of *catechumens*, in which they went through a course of instruction ; and in case of gross offences, and especially of apostacy in time of persecution, they were excommunicated, or rejected from the society ; and they could not be restored to communion with it, without going through a state of *penance*, and then they were not admitted without the consent of the whole church.

Though the people had the power of deposing, as well as of appointing, and ordaining their bishops, they did not, in general, chuse to do this without

without the sanction of the neighbouring bishops; and as in various other transactions, single churches wished to have the sanction of their brethren, this gave occasion to the calling of *synods*, or *councils*, and by degrees to the idea of a right in synods and councils to interfere in the business of particular churches, and to decide not only on the conduct, but also on the orthodoxy of particular persons. And as great deference was naturally paid to the bishops of the greater sees, as in those of Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Rome, Carthage, &c. the calling of synods, or councils, in the provinces of which those cities were the capitals, became in time appropriated to them. Of course they presided in them, and had the chief influence in directing their proceedings. This custom of meeting in synods, which was afterwards the cause of so much mischief, had a very innocent origin, and began, it is said, in Greece, where the people of neighbouring cities had been used to assemble for the purpose of consulting about their common interest.

This was the natural progress of things before the interference of the civil power in the affairs of the church, and notwithstanding the great evils which in a course of time arose from this system, especially in the obstruction of free inquiry, and in giving occasion to much violence and injustice, it was what the wisest men of that age could not well have

have forgotten. The idea of the *unity of the church*, and consequently the uniformity of its faith and practice, as opposed to those of schismatics and heretics, was in the infancy of things a very flattering one; and it was always known, that there could be no great and general good without some partial evils. It was also thought the part of modesty in a few to acquiesce in the judgment of many.

In some provinces synods were held frequently. Thus Firmilian says, that in his province they met every year; and it appears from the writings of Cyprian, that in his they sometimes met oftener. Those who were convened on these occasions were not only the bishops and the clergy, but also laymen, to represent the people; the power of a synod being naturally lodged in the same hands as that of particular churches. But it is probable that, on these public occasions, very few would attend, or at least have much influence, besides the clergy.

The method of public worship among christians in these early times was generally this. They began with reading the scriptures, and sometimes other useful writings, after which they sung psalms, chiefly those of David, and then the bishop, or any other person, appointed by him, gave a discourse, or sermon, which was generally an exposition of the portions of scripture which had been read.

Then

Then followed the prayer which preceded the celebration of the eucharist, and the superstitious custom of looking towards the East while they prayed, soon became general. In this prayer they sometimes introduced the Lord's prayer, but they had no prescribed liturgy, every person who officiated praying according to his ability ; and indeed in that age no public speaker used any notes. After prayer the people joined by saying aloud. *Amen.*

When persons were baptized they answered to certain questions that were put to them, the first of which was whether they would lead a good life ; which was commonly expressed by saying that they renounced the devil, and all his works, or the world, &c. They were then asked whether they believed the articles of the christian faith, which were repeated to them in the order of what is commonly called the apostles creed. At first this consisted but of very few articles, but afterwards more were added, in order to exclude the Gnostics. In consequence of this, though the baptismal creed consisted of nearly the same articles in all the catholic churches, yet, as it was not committed to writing, there were some variations in it in different churches.

That infants were both baptized, and also partook of the eucharist, there seems to me to be no reasonable doubt ; since it is impossible to trace its rise, or any variation in the practice ; and occasions

sions occurred, at least in the time of Austin, on which learned and ingenious men might have availed themselves of the consideration of the novelty of the practice, if they could have proved it to be novel.

At baptism adult persons answered for themselves ; but for children there were appointed *sponsors*, whose office it was to instruct them in the principles of the christian religion when they were capable of it. The superstitious custom of exorcising, or casting out evil spirits, which were supposed to possess or haunt persons, also preceded baptism in this period. The minister then prayed, and his prayer was very soon supposed to convey some purifying virtue to the water, by which it could actually wash away sin, and on this account some superstitious persons deferred baptism till they apprehended that they were near death. In the act of baptizing it soon became the custom to immerse the person three times, corresponding to the successive invocation of the names of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

In cases in which the dipping of the whole body was inconvenient, as of sick persons, &c. sprinkling was thought to suffice, and though this was not deemed to be so regular a baptism as that by immersion, it was not denied that it had the same consequences ; and they who had been baptized in this manner were never baptized again,

After baptism the christians put on white raiment, and were then anointed with oil called the *chrism*, which was applied to the fore-head by signing them with the sign of the cross\* ; and after this the person who baptized put his hands upon them, praying that they might receive the Holy Ghost. The superstitious origin of these customs will easily be conceived. Anointing was a ceremony of consecration, borrowed from the Jewish ritual ; and the sign of the cross was to shew that they should be ready to take up their cross and follow Christ. To the above mentioned ceremonies were sometimes added the eating of milk and honey, as a token of the new converts becoming again children, and commencing a new life.

The public services of every Lord's-day concluded with the celebration of the Lord's Supper ; but it was occasionally administered early in the day, and sometimes twice a day. It soon became the custom to exclude the catechumens, as well as those who were in a state of penance, from attending this part of the service, on the idea of its being a *mystery*, resembling the heathen *initiations*. Previous to the celebration in some places, and in others after it, those who attended made their oblations, of things proper for the use of the poor, and  
for

\* There was no unction before baptism in the time of Tertullian, but only after it ; and this was begun in his time, probably to represent the unction of the Holy Spirit. *Bingham*, p. 536.



for other purposes. After this the minister delivered a discourse suitable to the occasion, and then prayed. When this was done, he brake the bread, and the deacons distributed it to all who were present. But in some places this was done by the presbyters, or by the bishops themselves, the people coming to the table, and receiving it standing. Lastly, they sung a hymn, which closed the service.

The christian churches in this age were generally built with one end pointing to the east, but they were not considered as *holy*, no ceremony of consecration being then used. The chief day for assembling in these places for public worship, was the first day of the week, or the Lord's-day, which was considered as a festival; and on it they neither fasted, nor kneeled, but performed their devotions standing. It was also the custom in many of the eastern churches, to assemble for divine worship on Saturday, which was the Jewish sabbath.

The bishops appointed occasional *fasts*, as they saw reason, and on these days it was the custom to abstain from food till the evening. But it was generally the custom to have two weekly fasts, viz. Wednesdays and Fridays, commonly called *stations*, in allusion to the military stations, or soldiers standing on their guard; and on these days the fasting ended with divine service, at three in the afternoon. The fasting on Friday was in commemoration

memoration of the crucifixion ; but the reason for fasting on Wednesday is not so well known. Perhaps it was the day on which Jesus was betrayed by Judas. Besides these weekly fasts, which were voluntary, there was an annual one, with us called *Lent*, which was soon considered as necessary to be observed. It lasted from Friday, the day of the crucifixion in Passion week, to the Sunday following which was the day of the resurrection ; and because this fast generally continued forty hours, it was thence termed *quadragesima*. In the progress of superstition this fast of forty hours was extended to forty days. The strictest of all the fasts was called *superposition*, and continued till the morning of the next day, as on Easter eve, and with some on every Saturday.

The most ancient festival among christians was that of Easter, in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. The next was that of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, in remembrance of the descent of the Holy Spirit. This is mentioned by Origen and Tertullian. Christmas was not observed in this period, but the Epiphany, or the day of Christ's baptism, was observed by the Basilidians. Besides these festivals, every church celebrated its own martyrs on the day of their deaths. All these festivals were spent in religious exercises.

The revenues of any particular church were one gross fund to which all contributed voluntarily,

rily, according to their ability ; and, with the consent of all the members, it was appropriated to particular uses, as the maintenance of their clergy, and other officers, the relief of the poor, the repairs and other expences attending the place of worship, &c. In this distribution, as in every thing else, the bishop, without having nominally any more power, would of course have the most influence ; and before the close of this period the great sees were possessed of large revenues,

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## SECTION XI.

### *Of the Doctrines of this Period.*

**O**F those doctrines which have been deemed to be most important, those concerning the person of Christ continued without any sensible variation from the time of Justin Martyr to that of Constantine. The common people were in general Unitarians, as indeed we find them to be in a later period ; but there was, no doubt, an increase of Trinitarians, especially among the more learned clergy, who were struck with the flattering idea (the same, in fact, which had misled the Gnostics) of the natural superiority of the founder  
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of their religion to any thing merely human. They thought that to the complete man Jesus there was superadded the uncreated *Logos* of the Father, which had assumed a proper personality at the time of the creation, and was inseparably united to him from the time of his conception. It was, however, universally acknowledged, that there was a time (if that could be called *time* which preceded the creation) in which this *logos* had not been emitted from the Father; so that, in the whole eternity which preceded this event, God was the same being that the Jews and the Unitarians held him to be, viz. absolutely *one* and *without a son*.

That Christ had no human soul besides this *logos*, and that this human soul had pre-existed when the souls of other men had not, and that this created *logos* (which afterwards became the proper soul of Jesus) had been the instrument in the hand of God in making the world, consisting of all things visible and invisible, material and immaterial, is an opinion that, as far as appears, was not started in this period, but we shall see it to rise, and be the cause of great commotions in the christian world, in the very beginning of the next.

With respect to every doctrine of a properly practical tendency, it cannot be doubted that it was the opinion of all the christian world within this period, that every man has a natural power to do the will of God; and that God, without the  
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intervention of Christ, is naturally placable to returning sinners ; so that the doctrine of supernatural grace, of original sin, of predestination, and of atonement, were then unknown : nor, indeed, did any of them appear till a much later period. It seems, however, to have been generally thought, that God afforded extraordinary aid on extraordinary occasions, as in the time of martyrdom, &c.

There began indeed to prevail some obscure notion that, when it is said that Christ died a *ransom* for us, there was something more than a mere figure of speech intended. But that this ransom had been paid to God, and that he had been thereby rendered placable, so that, on this account, repentance had become available to pardon, had not been supposed by any one. If this had been the case, the system of the Gnostics in general, and that of the Manicheans in particular, would have been objected to, as providing no proper atonement for the sins of men. But whatever else was then urged against that scheme, this argument is never mentioned, not even by Austin in a much later period.

To make something real of the ransom that is said to be given for us in two or three passages of the New Testament, it was supposed that, since God is the person who is said to have paid this price for us, it must have been given by God to that being in whose power we then were, viz. the devil. But the power that he had acquired over the

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the human race by the sin of Adam, was simply that of making men mortal ; death, or mortality, having been the original penalty of sin. By paying this ransom, therefore, it was thought that we were recovered out of the power of the devil, and restored to our former condition of immortality ; not indeed to take place immediately, but after death, so that all persons who partook of the redemption by Christ Jesus would be rendered immortal in a future state.

Consequently, this vague notion (which, however, does not seem to have been much attended to, for it is very seldom mentioned) had no connexion at all with the pardon of sin, with respect to individuals of the human race. Besides, they who thought that God had paid this price for the redemption of mankind from the power of the devil, were universally of opinion, that, if he had pleased, he might have redeemed, or delivered, men, from the power of the devil, or their subjection to death, in any other way. He might have done it, they said, at his arbitrary pleasure, or by mere power, without giving any ransom at all ; but that he chose to deliver men in this way, that he might appear just and equitable in his proceedings.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









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